Kuji
A Spiritual Path

byJames Clum

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to Richard, my teacher and friend.

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Preface

My interest in Kuji-In started more than 30 years ago. At that time I was curious about all world religions and was particularly fascinated with Buddhism and Taoism. Coincidentally, I also started studying martial arts around the same time. The combination of these interests led me by way of a friend to the writings of Stephen K. Hayes who was at the time the foremost teacher of Ninjutsu in the United States. In some of his books in the early 1980's he had mentioned certain hand positions used by ninja of the past and the incantations that went along with them. I was hooked. I found the whole topic fascinating, and from then on I would little by little over the years continue my research and practice of these hands seals and the incantations known as Kuji-In.

I knew that the Kuji-In were for protection, spiritual balance, and empowerment, but I had no idea why or how. These questions would gnaw at me until I found the answers. The answers would come from a variety of sources. I have never felt it to be my calling to become a monk and study Buddhism as a vocation. So, I have always approached the topic as practitioner and a scholar. I have shared in this book what I have learned from my research, but also what I have learned from practicing the Kuji-In. You might say that by practicing the Kuji-In one can gain insights that are not possible in any other way. Certain relationships and connections became apparent to me that I would not have known otherwise.

To understand the Kuji-In it is necessary to learn about Buddhism. Since not all Buddhists practice anything even similar to Kuji-In, it then becomes necessary to study Esoteric Buddhism in particular. By doing this one gains a context which gives completeness to why the Kuji-In have such powerful effect and why they have and will always have profound meaning that will seem to change as times and cultures change. Their meaning lies largely in their symbolism which is spiritually and culturally rich. This symbolism is layered in that certain elements of their practice have a history that spans multiple East Asian cultures over thousands of years.

Throughout man's civilized history and perhaps even before, there has existed the notion that the divine world was instrumental in shaping life as we know it on earth. Man's journey is one which interprets the divine language into the language of symbols. Through these symbols, roadmaps exist which point the way to the divine and back again to our own consciousness. From these resulting symbols one finds the connection not only to experiences which take us out of our own ego consciousness into higher consciousness, but also that which connects us to everyone else on the planet past or present. Unfortunately, we are attracted to our similarities and distracted by our differences. How we interpret the divine or higher consciousness stems from our cultural and ethnic heritages. The result is a multitude of paths that lead essentially to the same end. Regardless of the path you have chosen, the Kuji can bring balance and help us to address aspects of our lives that we can meditate and pray about to reach a higher potential.

Chapter 1

A Mystical Formula

Introduction to Kuji

It is a common misconception that the Kuji represent a type of secret spell or formula that bestows magical powers upon initiated users. As a result, the practice of Kuji-In (The Syllables and their Mudra) have largely been thought of as mystical practices of ninja, wizards, and Esoteric Buddhist priests. The truth is that they are probably much older than the earliest written records we have of them, and they were used in a variety of ways historically. Each culture which came in contact with the Kuji added and subtracted meaning based on their own place and time.

The Taoist Origins of Kuji

A Taoist in China named *Ge-Hong* (280-340 CE) wrote a book entitled *Bao Pu Zi* which contained an interesting passage strikingly similar to the set of Kuji practiced by some today. The section of the Bao Pu Zi suggests a protective charm for avoiding calamities while traveling through the mountains: According to Bao Pu Zi,

"When entering the well known mountains, one must choose a day on the first day of the Heavenly Stem, and hang five colored silk measuring five inches from a large rock. Also, when entering the mountain, prepare the Liujia (Six Generals) secret incantation. The incantation is said, Lin2, Bing1, Dou4, Zhe3, Jie1, Zhen4, Lie4 Chian2, Xing2."

The first line of characters is the original charm. The second line of characters shows the ones used commonly in Japan which will be focused on in this book.

臨兵鬥者，皆陣列前行

臨兵闘者，皆陳列在前

Looking at the characters one can see that the third ones are different. The third character written on the top line means 'to fight.' The meaning for the third character on the bottom line is a Japanese variant with the same meaning. The last two characters on the top row are reversed from those on the bottom row, and one character is different. The last two characters on the top could be read 'go forward' and the last two on the bottom read 'at the front.' These are minor differences with basically the same overall meaning with relation to the meaning of the sentence as a whole. The characters read as a sentence which goes something like this:

Summon the army to fight, all arranged in columns to advance forward.

The incantation is not in any way phonetically significant. It is simply a call to arms for

generals of the spirit world to unite and be your vanguard. Whether or not these words originated with Taoism is uncertain. We do know that much in terms of spiritual practices made their way to China from India. Perhaps the origins lie there

About This Book

Perhaps in choosing this book you were interested in learning more about the interesting ways in which ninja or samurai laced their fingers together in some personalized ritual of self-empowerment. Having seen Buddhist statues or monks form similar gestures, even Japanese people might assume that their origins are Buddhist or Hindu. However, the Kuji themselves refer to the Nine Syllables we have just mentioned in this chapter and not to the *mudra* (lacing the fingers together into seals). This incantation was originally seen as strictly a protective charm to ward off evil and danger as one went through mountain passes. It may have been absorbed into Buddhism because of its effectiveness or perhaps because at one time it was in such widespread use. Each culture coming into contact with the incantation has seemed to attach its own meanings to it.

This book is designed to take an individual interested in the Kuji on a journey of meaning that will invest the simple incantation that we have learned not only with the meanings of the past but also with one's own meanings. The more you learn about the Kuji and how they have been used, the more time you will spend investing yourself in them. It would be unfortunate if someone were only looking for a quick set of words that would magically change their life or give them some kind of special powers. Each chapter in this book provides a different way to approach how to use the Kuji. All of it will be useful to you to invest meaning into these syllables. You may gravitate more to some sections than others, but please read this book in the order given as it is designed in such a way that knowledge will unravel and an experience will become real to you.

Exercise

The Secret Incantation

The earliest use of Kuji was as a Taoist charm for protection that called upon the assistance of various celestial generals for one's defense. The exercises in this book are meant to deepen one's understanding of the Kuji gradually over a series of steps. At this stage the goal is to correctly pronounce the incantation:

Rin Pyo To Sha Kai Jin Retsu Zai Zen

These words are essentially the Japanese pronunciation of Chinese words. The pronunciation for these words was given in this book earlier in Mandarin. Mandarin began to develop at the end of the Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE). So, at the time this charm was produced, Mandarin had not yet been spoken. In fact, at the time that Esoteric Buddhism

was brought to Japan, there were many languages spoken in China with a variety of dialects and sub-dialects. The Japanese pronunciation as it is shown above is based off of how Japanese would pronounce the Chinese characters at the time that they were introduced to Japan.

Most of these words are pronounced just as they look. However, some of them might be a little tricky if you are not familiar with Japanese. To pronounce ‘Pyo’ combine the two syllables ‘pi’ and ‘yo’ as one sound. ‘Kai’ is pronounced as one would say ‘pie.’ Finally, pronounce ‘Retsu’ by blending the two sounds ‘re’ and ‘tsu’ together to say something that sounds like ‘retz.’ Practice the order and pronunciation until you can easily recite them and your mind is not preoccupied with the order or pronunciation.

Chapter 2

A Brief History of Exoteric Buddhism

Historical Introduction

The Buddha was born *Siddartha Gautama* in Lumbini, Nepal around 563 BCE. Although there is some disagreement among historians about these places and dates. Being a prince his life was a pampered existence as attempts were made for him only to see and hear things of beauty.

Pain, suffering, poverty, old age and death were kept from Siddhartha, but one day he managed to catch a glimpse of an old man, and asked his chariot driver what happened to the man. When Siddhartha was told that this happened to everybody his curiosity grew and he wanted to go among his subjects to discover what else was being kept from him.

After seeing firsthand how life was far from perfect for his subjects he became very depressed and left his father's palace around the age of 29 to follow the life of an ascetic in attempt to overcome the sufferings that afflicted humanity. Siddartha sought after various *gurus* practicing what each believed to be the path that would offer liberation, but with each one he was not satisfied.

After learning meditation from various gurus he eventually moved on to study with ascetics who practiced extreme fasting. Siddhartha eventually became so emaciated that he collapsed from his meditation and almost died. A girl found him and gave him milk and rice pudding in an attempt to revive him. After regaining his strength he determined that the true way to liberation could not be gained by such extreme denial of the flesh.

Siddhartha was determined to attain enlightenment through *dhyanna* (meditation) choosing what he called 'The Middle Way.' It would be possible for anyone to follow this 'path of moderation' without suffering through renunciation. Vowing not to get up from meditation until he had become enlightened, at the age of 35 attained *budhabhava* (buddhahood) while sitting under a tree. From that time on he was called Buddha (The Awakened One).

It is known among historians that the Historical Buddha lived to be an old man. Over the course of his life he would have had thousands of followers and disciples. From memory, those close to him wrote down what they remembered, and compiled his teachings and sermons into volumes known as sutras. The sutras approach enlightenment from a variety of perspectives, and therefore take into account the natural differences that arise among individuals of different backgrounds and aptitudes.

The Historical Buddha was known to teach each person according to what his or her own capacity. As a result, some of his teachings are for lay people and some are for priests. Some of his teachings can be understood by reading and some can only by transmitted through initiation, meditation or direct transmission from a master.

The Path and the Truths

Shakyamuni realized that the cause of human suffering could be summarized easily into what he called the Four Noble Truths. He would later make this the focus of his first sermon. The truths are as follows:

1. Life means suffering
2. Suffering originates from attachment
3. Ending suffering is attainable
4. There is a path to end suffering

The path to end suffering he called the Eightfold Path which could be summarized as follows:

1. Right View (seeing things as they truly are)
2. Right Intention (motivation to act according to wisdom rather than passions)
3. Right Speech (speech that reflects moral integrity)
4. Right Action (activities that are ethical and do not harm other living things)
5. Right Livelihood (employment not directly or indirectly harming living things)
6. Right Effort (focus of effort on nurturing and positive activities)
7. Right Mindfulness (active control over thought processes)
8. Right Concentration (focus of the mind on what is what is beneficial)

Shortly after the Buddha was enlightened he preached near Benares to five of his companions symbolically putting into motion the *Dharmachakra* (The Wheel of the Law). The Dharmachakra, which looks much like a chariot wheel with eight spokes, represents the Eightfold Path. Perhaps this was borrowed from Hindu iconography which depicted horses bringing one's prayers to the heavens. Wheels, such as those used on chariots at the time, were a means of transportation suitable for kings, warriors and gods. This was seen as fitting considering how Shakyamuni was revered. The wheel symbolically goes forward through space and time propagating the *Dharma* (Buddhist Law).

Dependent Origination

Besides the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, another of the most notable doctrines of Buddha was Dependent Origination. This doctrine stipulates that everything arises in a dependent state of cause and effect.

From the Buddhist perspective, that which we cling to is referred to as 'aggregates' and form the basis for why we experience suffering. By coming to an understanding of these aggregates and letting go of them completely, one becomes liberated. From this line of thinking, Buddhists see all living things as existing in a state of interdependence. Therefore, causing suffering to any living thing in turn causes suffering to oneself.

The *Bhavacakra* (The Wheel of Life) is an artistic visual representation originally drawn by Buddha that depicts his understanding of the causes of suffering and how one is liberated from it. This 'flow' of life is referred to in Buddhism as *samsara*. The wheel represents this flow or 'cycle of life' and is represent by a large disc held by a demonic figure. At the hub of this wheel are the three poisons: ignorance, attachment and aversion. Outside of the hub is a second layer *karma* (deeds) which is believed to be the impetus that drives the

wheel. The third layer from the hub shows the Six Realms of Existence (*gati* is Sanskrit) in which all living organisms dwell as a result of their actions. These realms are as follows:

1. *Deva*- Divine Beings or Gods
2. Asura- Jealous Gods or Titans
3. Manusya- Humans
4. Tiryagyoni- Animals
5. Preta- Hungry Ghosts
6. Naraka- Hellish Being or Demons

In the fourth layer of the Wheel of Life are the Nidanas or 'Twelve Causes' which relate to suffering. These causes of suffering are as follows:

1. Avidya-Ignorance
2. Samskara- Mental Formations
3. Vijnana-Consciousness
4. Namarupa-Naming Forms
5. Sadayatana-Gate to the Six Senses
6. Sparsa- Contact
7. Vedana-Sensation
8. Trsna-Desire
9. Upadana-Attachment
10. Bhava-Becoming
11. Jiti- Birth
12. Jara Marana- Aging and Death

Above the wheel, a sky is shown with a figure of a moon on the right representing freedom from the cycle of *samsara*. On the left is a Buddha pointing to the moon as if to direct one to liberation. Keep in mind that according to myth, the moon is born, lives and dies through each lunar cycle. The Sun of course in mythological terms represent eternal life.

The Wheel of Life is a very concise visual organizer that explains the causes of suffering and how to liberate oneself from it. In summary, the three poisons cause one's karma. Our karma determines the realm in which we are born. The realm in which we are born determines the causes of our suffering. The cycle itself is endless but it has no need for permanence other than to say the Law of Cause and Effect perpetuate it. By breaking this chain of causes through meditation and eventual enlightenment, the Buddha was able to suspend the Law of Cause and Effect and thereby find a way out of suffering.

Though cause and effect, perpetuates suffering through one's karma (deeds), the Wheel of the Law in a sense could be seen as running counter to it providing an escape by the renunciation of attachments and taking control over one's senses. The result is the discovery of one's true mind.

Once Buddha was enlightened, having reached the stage of consciousness in which one is not reborn by transmigration, he could have gone on to *Nirvana* (Paradise); however, his compassion for all humanity was such that he chose not to go until all others had gone before him. Such a promise to save others is called a *Bodhisattva* vow. We can say that by this choice, Buddha became the first *Bodhisattva* or 'person who seeks enlightenment for others.' There have been innumerable others since as Buddhist monks and nuns make this vow as they become initiated.

As Buddhism moved Eastward over the centuries from Nepal to other parts of Asia a major division developed producing what is known as *Hinayana* (Lesser Vehicle) and *Mahayana* (Greater Vehicle) Buddhism. These divisions arose for a variety of reasons, but one major reason was doctrine. Hinayana Buddhism uses what is called the *Tripitaka* or *Pali Canon* exclusively. This canon consists of the *sutras* (original teaching of the Buddha), *Abhidharma* (interpretations and commentary) and *Vinaya* (rules and regulations).

Mahayana Buddhism also accepts this canon but additionally has a variety of other doctrines that have been added over time the scope of which goes beyond what can be discussed concisely here. Whereas the evolution of Hinayana has been quite conservative over time, Mahayana Buddhism has changed and adapted to the lands and cultures in which it was practiced.

The Six Perfections

The teaching of the Buddha have been written down since his death and compiled over centuries in thousands of translations and theses. Much of this was distilled into something practical that the average person could apply to their lives easily. This condensation of the Buddha's teachings as a guide for living can be found in the Six Paramitas (Perfections).

1. Generosity
2. Ethical Discipline
3. Patience
4. Enthusiastic Effort
5. Concentration
6. Wisdom

Each of these virtues is built upon the preceding ones finally resulting in enlightenment. Each person is capable of improving in these areas starting with generosity. By giving to others, one begins to chip away at selfish tendencies. These virtues should not just be given lip-service since they are the steps to enlightenment.

Buddhists take a vow to work towards enlightenment and never give up. One does not fail by failing at these virtues, but rather by failing to try. This very forgiving approach has

made Exoteric Buddhism appealing worldwide and exemplifies Buddha's teaching of a less extreme or "Middle Way" approach to enlightenment.

Wisdom

In Sanskrit, the word *Prajna* is synonymous with wisdom. Wisdom is not to be confused with intelligence or knowledge simply gained by experience. Wisdom as it is referred to in Buddhism, comes from certain realizations or 'awakenings' to truth. In other words, wisdom refers to what could be thought of as operating from a higher consciousness. This is outlined very clearly in the *Eight Enlightenments of the Great Beings Sutra* which could be summarized as follows:

Life is impermanent.

Desire produces suffering.

The mind is never satisfied.

Idleness is detrimental to one's life.

Ignorance causes an endless cycle of birth and death.

Hardship is due to inequity and is inseparable from resentment.

Attachments to material pleasures are obstacles to the spiritual path.

One must help others be liberated from the endless cycle of birth and death.

The term 'wisdom' which is used quite a bit in Buddhism in one sense can refer to the 'awakening' experienced by the Shakyamuni Buddha in which he realized the Four Noble Truths, and was able to transcend suffering and the cycle of birth and death. However, in another sense, he understood that there is no awakening, no death, and no suffering. These are just illusions.

From a Buddhist perspective, even atoms are an illusion since there are progressively smaller particles. Therefore, nothing really exists separately from anything else. We are all composed of energy particles which according to our perspective take structured form.

Ultimately, Shakyamuni's awakening revealed that all form is an illusion and a product of the mind. Liberation of any sentient being would then be postulated on only the perspective that the individual exists separately from others. This is clearly explained in the *Great Heart of Wisdom Sutra*:

‘All these various paths are empty. No birth no death, no filth no purity; no increase no decrease. Therefore, in emptiness there is no form, sensation, perception, conceptions, and consciousness; no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no images, sounds, smells, tastes, things to feel, or Dharma; no mind nor consciousness; no ignorance nor end of ignorance, no old age and death nor end of old age and death. There is no suffering, desire, elimination, or Way, no realization and no attainment. There is nothing to obtain.”

The purpose of wisdom in Buddhism is not just to understand the cause of suffering and find liberation from it. Rather it is the discovery of truth that comes from a higher consciousness that is equally determined to help others.

Truth sets us free from attachments that create a biased perspective. These attachments include biases imposed by language, culture, era, religion and a whole host of other factors. The lie that misleads us originates in believing that this world is more than just passing phenomena.

Compassion

Just as wisdom should not be confused with the intellect, compassion is not to be confused with the emotions. In Sanskrit the term *karuna* means ‘compassion’ and its meaning is used to describe sympathy for those who suffer and a willingness to share the burden of the suffering of others.

To develop compassion, our attention must turn away from ourselves and on to other people. Coincidentally, compassion was the inspiration for the Shakyamuni Buddha’s desire to become enlightened in the first place. If it were not for this, he would have remained inside the palace walls.

Compassion and Wisdom are inseparable, as one generates the other. To give of one’s self completely requires that one think of others and not oneself. In this process, the *anatman* (illusionary ego self) fades and one’s ‘true nature’ begins to blossom. This *atman* (true nature) is also called the Buddha nature. In the *Bodhicaryavatara (The Key to Becoming a Bodhisattva)*, *Shantideva Bodhisattva* puts this very clearly into focus:

'One who wishes to protect oneself and others should practice the great mystery of exchanging oneself for others.

All the joy the world contains has come through wishing happiness for others.

All the misery the world contains has come through wanting pleasure for oneself.

In order to fulfill the needs of beings

May I be as a magic gem,
An inexhaustible vase, a mystic spell,
A cure-all medicine, and a wish granting tree.'

Words versus Action

It would be far more beneficial to know a little about the Kuji-In and practice what you know diligently than to read a lot about this topic and simply move on to other things. A scholarly approach to Kuji-In, Buddhism or any other topic may be intellectually satisfying, but it does not necessarily do anything to improve the quality of one's life or others around you. Therefore, it is not what you know that is important. Really, in the end what is important is how one has lived and how one's life has touched others.

The greatest achievement is selflessness.
The greatest worth is self-mastery.
The greatest quality is seeking to serve others.
The greatest precept is continual awareness.
The greatest medicine is the emptiness of everything.
The greatest action is not conforming to the world.
The greatest magic is transcending passions.
The greatest generosity is non-attachment.
The greatest goodness is a peaceful mind.
The greatest patience is humility.
The greatest effort is not concerned with results.
The greatest meditation is a mind that lets go.
The greatest wisdom is seeing through appearances.

Atisha (11th century Tibetan Buddhist master)

Chapter 3

The Six Perfections

The Six Perfections came from a synthesis of various teachings of the Sakyamuni Buddha. They represent an abridged pathway to attaining enlightenment. Each should be studied, meditated upon and then practiced repeatedly in daily life. To gain an appropriate understanding of the Kuji-In warrants a closer look into the Six Perfections and Buddhism in general. Because the focus of this book is on the practice of Kuji-In, I will use this time to explain to the reader why the Kuji-In are a valuable tool on the path to enlightenment.

The Kuji-In represent nine syllables that are spoken in conjunction with various ways of lacing the fingers together in mudra. The practice of the Kuji-In embodies the core teachings of Buddhism and therefore one should approach them with respect and sincerity. This practice is often done daily along with personal affirmations and visualizations. Although there are many ways to practice Kuji-In and many interpretations on their meaning, I will explain here how each could be interpreted according to certain Buddhist principles.

1. Giving

The act of giving allows us to break from attachments to things that we ordinarily cling to and take for ourselves. In this way we cherish ourselves less and other people more. For this reason, each person may give in a way that is most suitable to the needs of each situation that arises in life. A rich person may be able to give more whereas a poor person may be able to give less. To the extent that giving requires sacrifice, the more valuable the gift regardless of the amount or value. This is not dictated by the values and norms of society, but rather by the pure intention of the heart.

How each person gives may be different, and so it is generous to recognize the limitations of how each person can give in his or her own way. Just as some are not born into a home privileged by material wealth, not everyone is raised in such a way that others come first. Furthermore, while giving to others it may be necessary to realize that what may benefit one person may not benefit another. By giving to each person according to their real needs as you see it, one truly gives in a wise and caring way.

Giving is not limited to material things. In fact, since material things may be used up or wear out, giving wisdom and encouragement are perhaps even more useful. Wisdom can change the course of someone's life for the better. We can do this best by listening, and helping without judgment in a way that gently nudges the person towards happiness.

Sharing a simple quote, an inspirational book or a meaningful passage may inspire another person to make simple changes. We can also give by helping others to take on burdens which they cannot bear alone. By encouraging others to take heart and face challenges with perseverance, one can empower others to go on to do great things later in their lives. This strengthening through giving is practiced by parents and teachers. Anyone can do it if the desire is there.

There are obviously people who are distressed and would benefit greatly from getting their lives in order. Such people may use the Kuji-In to help themselves. However, share the

strength you gain with others so that it will grow like seeds. We have the opportunity and the obligation to empower others with the Kuji-In, and this is a valuable form of giving.

2. Moral Conduct

By showing self-restraint one is able to purify one's thoughts, words, and actions. One effective way of accomplishing this is by asking these important questions as a way to reflect upon one's own behavior:

Is what I'm <u>thinking</u> kind to others or selfish?
Is what I'm <u>saying</u> kind to others or selfish?
Is what I'm <u>doing</u> kind to others or selfish?

Ethical discipline is developed over time as one slowly turns away from activities that are not wholesome and do not benefit others. Increasingly, in this process one gains greater control over one's own mind and behaviors. This of course is the job of a lifetime. Each individual has his or her own strengths or weaknesses and progress can be gauged according to how well one refrains from activities that are ultimately destructive and not feeling attachment for them.

The nature of human failings is such that because people feel held to a standard they may be sorry about having done something wrong without reflecting on why it was wrong. In other words, people unfortunately tend to focus on their own failings and not on how their actions affect others. Rather than thinking in terms of sins or mistakes, it is perhaps more beneficial to think of how our actions cause other people suffering. The more we include 'we' into our thoughts, we then develop in terms of caring for others.

No actions in and of themselves are by nature wrong. It is solely their effect on others that make them wrong. Stealing for example is typically considered a sin, and giving a virtue, but without considering other details this is not necessarily the case. If one steals, a weapon that one knows will be used to harm others, one prevents a greater sin from happening and this is a generous and heroic act. If one gives to another something that will cause him harm like tobacco or drugs, then this is not really a gift at all for it will only cause harm eventually. How one gives then requires not only generosity but also moral and ethical wisdom.

When most people think of protection, they think of defending their property. Sometimes valuing possessions may take precedence over personal well-being. How else could we explain why people would work at jobs that they know are stressful when they are free to choose another line of work?

While certain aspects of one's life are cultivated, others can be neglected such as spiritual development. Though some people may have an interest in spiritual matters, making the time is a common obstacle because of other more worldly preoccupations.

Whether you believe in life after death or not is of course a matter of personal choice. If you think that this life is all that there is, why not just enjoy it- whatever the cost? Why work so hard just for things that you cannot take with you when you die? Why spend a whole week earning the money to find a few hours of enjoyment on the weekends? If on the other hand, you believe that how you live this life will determine your existence after your death,

why not protect your spiritual future? Why not attend to your own mind?

Inevitably we all make mistakes and hurt others by what we do or fail to do. In such times we should feel remorseful, and seek to amend the situation by doing better in the future. If we are making progress with ethical discipline, then this will be demonstrated by our reluctance to do activities that cause harm to others.

This broadening consideration for others has many implications. Going a step further, we could see that these principles could be applied to the environment, social justice and a variety of other concerns of great importance for mankind.

Focusing our thoughts, words and deeds can shape our moral discipline and this has tremendous impact on the quality of life. This will also deepen your understanding and practice of the Kuji-In.

3. Patience

Through patience, negative emotions like anger lose their power over us. By becoming angry we essentially relinquish control of our reasoning to selfish feelings.

Anger typically arises when we bear something unpleasant that we feel has imposed upon us. We then begin to look for the cause and who is to blame. We willing engage in these emotions knowing that some external culprit is responsible. Yet our reaction is the true cause, and this comes solely from our own mind.

Being stuck in traffic we may blame the driver's ahead of us, or the fact that it is a Friday afternoon or rush hour. Yet, all of these things can only cause our frustration if we allow them to. It is completely up to us and our ability to control our own minds.

It is possible to watch how your mind reacts to unbearable situations. By being an observer of your own mind it is possible to step away from the situation in an objective way and look at what is really happening. We can be mindful of how our mind and heart are reacting to situations as events unfold and not just be pulled as though we were forced to go along for the ride. Perhaps you've driven on a freeway and let your mind wander. Maybe five miles down the road you look around not realizing or remembering how you've gotten there because your mind was somewhere else. The more we practice focusing on the moment for what it is objectively, the less frustrated we will get over small matters and feel in the driver's seat.

By taking this analogy a step further, we can watch ourselves as the passenger and wonder who is driving. The angry driver is not really you. There is essentially no substance to how we identify 'I'. We may only come to this realization by stepping back from what we are absorbed with and do some self-reflecting. Small steps are progress as this seems to run counter to the way we normally think of our lives and ourselves. It takes patience.

Patience is necessary to make lasting worthwhile changes in our life. After all, the way we normally look at things is the result of years of reinforcement and is difficult to untangle. We've sought distractions to prevent boredom throughout our lives. Evaluating what is pleasant and unpleasant as having equal value is quite revolutionary to our ordinary way of thinking. We tend to be drawn only to the things that please us and avoid that which does not.

Patience also encompasses the idea of being tolerant of others as well as unpleasant situations that might arise. This doesn't mean that we will not be naturally drawn to some people and not others. It simply means that we will no longer allow the mind to become afflicted by the normal patterns of life that cause unhappiness.

Apply this knowledge to your practice of the Kuji-In. At first you may feel silly. If you continue you may feel enthusiasm at first but then later want to give up. Persevere. The Kuji-In is a tool to work on the self, and this takes a lifetime.

4. Courageous Effort

We think of heroes as being people who willingly make sacrifices or put themselves in danger to save others. Soldiers, police officers and fire fighters earn their living this way, but they are not the only ones who participate in this heroic form of giving. Spouses sometimes give up their time, their money or even their dreams to make their husband or wife happy. Parents, particularly mothers, will often not eat until their children have been fed. Sometimes they will even eat the scraps of food instead of enjoying a meal themselves. Deriving one's joy from the happiness of others is truly heroic.

Love can be a powerful motivation for others to give selflessly, and each selfless act chisels away at the ego. How then can we be motivated to care for all people the way a mother would care for a child? It isn't easy. We have to start with trying, though. A genuine desire to be kind to others is a start. To encourage these thoughts in the mind even occasionally at first slowly changes the consciousness over time. When one realizes that one's mind has not been thinking of others first in a kind and giving way, one can recommit to staying on track and doing better. It is not courageous to just give up feeling that the process of change is too difficult. It takes generosity, moral discipline, and patience to make a difference in our lives.

Laziness, apathy, and procrastination can stand in our way and keep us from reaching our goals. Events of the past can produce fears that cause us to make excuses for ourselves. At such times we should remember that we have a short time in this life.

Our death is inevitable and there is no way to know for certain when our life might suddenly end. We can neither think pessimistically that our own happiness is impossible nor think that it is somehow guaranteed. By thinking that our lives are a work in progress, we realize that our improvements may come slowly in small increments for which we should be thankful.

Our lives could suddenly be taken from us at any time. Therefore, there really is no time like the present to boldly take heart and live our lives to the fullest. Since most people don't know about the Kuji-In, your practice of using them may be difficult to explain. The benefits you gain for others and yourself will develop in a way that goes largely unnoticed by others by your own heroic efforts.

5. Mindfulness

The contemplative mind is obtained through meditation of which there are two main types: Tranquil Abiding and Analytical Meditation.

Tranquil abiding is practiced by focusing one's concentration on an object of meditation. It

is also referred to as Placement Meditation. The focus could be on one's breath, a mantra, a picture, or something else. Just find a quiet place, sit and begin focusing single mindedly on your object of meditation. This is not to suggest that one should think about that which one focuses on. In fact, it is exactly the opposite.

One should just focus on an object without consciously making arbitrary distinctions about it. Don't animate it. Don't remember it. Don't ask yourself how you feel about it. In other words, imagine keeping your mind on a metaphoric leash. Too much slack in the leash and your mind will wander like a curious dog on a walk. Pull the leash too tight and your mind will become agitated like a dog forced to sit as other dogs walk by. Take in the object for now in its entirety.

As an object, a blank wall could be used as this will tend to eliminate a source of visual distractions.

Analytical meditation can be practiced while doing one's daily affairs or while studying. It is a way to gain an understanding of the nature of one's mind through introspection.

The mind is not intrinsically real no more than anything else is. Everything should be looked at as though it were real only in the sense that dreams appear real to us. In this way, we can watch the world and our mind's reactions as though we were looking at someone else's dream. When we react with unkind words or become emotional about something we can just observe how we react. As time goes on, we can begin to participate in daily phenomena with a sense of objectivity.

Analytic meditation is a bit like being a guard in charge of a room at an art museum. The guard's job is to make sure that nobody becomes so fixated on the paintings that they actually touch them. When the guard sees somebody getting a little too close, the guard will step up and remind them. On slow days at the museum, a guard like this has an easy job. You will too when not much is happening around you. There are however days that the guard will become quite apprehensive as his mindfulness can only be attentive to so much. It is at busy times like this that he may be so focused on one person that another will touch the paintings behind his back while he is not looking. Guarding our mind is quite similar. With practice, we can maintain this tranquil abiding for longer periods.

6. Perfect Wisdom

Buddhists practice diligently to reach a state of mental calmness and clarity called enlightenment. In this state, one's mind is tranquil and undisturbed by worldly phenomena. A profound understanding of each of the Six Perfections that transcends the intellect is fully realized. The true nature of all things is revealed as emptiness which cannot be understood so much as experienced directly.

Emptiness in this context refers to fact that nothing has any intrinsic identity unique to itself. This also includes all phenomena in which things are experienced. The Heart of Perfect Wisdom Sutra explains this state very eloquently.

The Great Heart of Perfected Wisdom Sutra

Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, being in a deep in state of Perfected Wisdom (Prajna Paramita), could see clearly that form, sensation, perception, conceptions, and

consciousness that produce the illusion of 'self' were empty and then crossed beyond all suffering and difficulty to the other shore.

"Shariputra, form is not different from emptiness; emptiness is not different from form. Form is precisely emptiness; emptiness is precisely form. So too are sensations, perceptions, conceptions, and consciousness.

Shariputra, all these various phenomenon are empty. No birth no death, no filth no purity; no increase no decrease. Therefore, in emptiness there is no form, sensation, perception, conceptions, and consciousness; no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no images, sounds, smells, tastes, things to feel, or phenomena; no mind nor consciousness; no ignorance nor end of ignorance, no old age and death nor end of old age and death. There is no suffering, desire, elimination, or phenomena, no realization and no attainment. There is nothing to obtain. The Bodhisattva relies on Perfected Wisdom keeping a mind free of obstructions by Perfected Wisdom. Because there are no obstructions, he is not afraid, and he leaves delusions of the mind behind. Finally, Pure Bliss! All Buddhas of the past, present and future attain Perfect Enlightenment through Perfected Wisdom. Therefore know that Prajna Paramita is a divine mantra, a vast mantra, an illuminated mantra, a supreme mantra, an unparalleled mantra that removes all suffering with its inexhaustible truth. Now say the Prajna Paramita Mantra like this.

Gaté Gaté Paragaté Parasamgaté Bodhi Swaha

Chapter 4

A Brief History of Esoteric Buddhism

Esoteric Buddhism

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, the Historical Buddha taught according to the capacity of the listener. Although there are innumerable differences among sects, most Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhists believe that it may take many lifetimes to achieve buddha-hood themselves and become fully enlightened. This view is held widely since most lay people primarily use Buddhism as a guide to how to live their lives. The average lay Buddhist puts many other daily concerns far ahead of enlightenment. Slowly, little by little one is expected to spiritually evolve becoming at some point a Buddha.

Esoteric Buddhism sees this slow evolution toward buddhahood as unnecessary. It is considered unnecessary because the Historical Buddha became enlightened in his own lifetime. In the Esoteric traditions it is believed that that Buddha clearly provided the path for others to accomplish this as well. Therefore, Esoteric Buddhism sees the Exoteric path as only a superficial or provisional interpretation of what the Historical Buddha actually taught.

In Japan, Esoteric Buddhism is referred to as *Mikkyo* which means the 'Secret Teachings.' Whereas Mahayana has largely been passed through the generations by study of the sutras (teachings of the Buddha) and by group instruction, Esoteric Buddhism has always been passed down from master to disciple. By comparison one might find more rituals within Mikkyo that those who are unfamiliar may describe as mystical.

Originally, Mikkyo was brought to Japan by two great teachers at about the same time. One was *Saicho* (also known as *Dengyo Daishi*) who founded *Tendai* Buddhism. The other was *Kukai* (also known as *Kobo Daishi*) who founded *Shingon* Buddhism. The two share many similarities. Both went to separate parts of China to study Esoteric Buddhism for the purpose of its propagation in Japan, and both were ultimately successful. Kukai taught that it was possible to become a Buddha in this present life which became a major tenant of Shingon. Although, some sects of Buddhism believe that one may attain enlightenment in this lifetime, this is not a point of view shared by the majority.

As a side note, Kobo Daishi was a notable figure in Japanese history. He is credited with making hiragana (the phonetic alphabet of Japanese) as well building the first school in Japan among his many accomplishments.

Characteristics of Esoteric Buddhism

Esoteric Buddhism is known for its initiations by one on one transmission to the deeper aspects of the Esoteric path that cannot be completely understood with the intellect alone. This path forms an unbroken chain to the transmissions that Buddha gave his own

disciples. For this reason, there is much that is unknown about the details of Mikkyo rituals and practice.

There is much symbolism in Buddhist iconography which colors everything with layers of meaning. From the Esoteric perspective, there are two kinds of meaning- relative and absolute.

The Esoteric view is that all of the Buddhas words, gestures, mudra, mantra, and sermons could be interpreted in either relative or absolute terms. They hold that Exoteric Buddhism, catering to a more literal interpretation of these things, invest them with meaning that is only transitory in nature and is removed at least in perspective from the true essence of what they truly represent. It is not that one is right and the other is wrong. They are both the same thing. This seems to be one of many paradoxes in Mikkyo.

Perhaps we can understand this better if we see that all of these teachings remain unchanged by whether or not one perceives them as relative or absolute. These distinctions are made by the subject and not the object of discussion. In absolute terms from the Esoteric perspective, both the subject and the object are in reality no different and lack separateness. Therefore, the relative meaning and the absolute meaning are intertwined.

Other defining characteristics of Mikkyo include:

1. The use of mantra, and mudra.

2. The use of mandalas as pictures and sculptures.

3. The belief that sounds or seed syllables express profound meaning and can transform consciousness.

4. The principle that one can become a Buddha in this lifetime.

5. The use of visualization as an essential element of meditation.

6. The practice of empowerment through the use of mudra and mantra.

7. The use of fire as a symbol of purification in offerings.

8. The veneration of Dai Nichi Nyorai (Great Solar Buddha) as a manifestation of all consciousness in the universe.

9. The understanding that in absolute terms there is no nirvana, no buddhas, no enlightenment, no perfections, no distinguishable self, no form, no birth, and no death.

10. The use of symbolic ritual objects such as the vajra and bell.

11. The significance of the five elements (earth, water, fire, wind and void).

12. The recognition that the Esoteric path is the ultimate teaching.

13. The practice of The Three Mysteries (Sanmitsu) as an essential part of rituals, empowerments and meditation.

This is an oversimplification to be sure, but I've tried to highlight some of the major differences in a brief manner. Much could be said about each of these examples and I will try to delve into these particular differences in later sections. For now we should acknowledge that the practice of Kuji-In more closely aligns itself with the Esoteric path in Buddhism.

Chapter 5

Mudra of the Awakened One

The Origin of Mudra

The gestures of the Buddha's hands in various statues reflect scenes of his life, but are also meaningful symbols. Gestures similar to these are used in folk dances for their meaningful expression. In essence they can relay in poise and movement that which words cannot convey. The feeling of the body and also the state of mind can be expressed well using gestures. This serves to create a wordless transmission to the observant viewer.

Mudras can be traced back to their origins in the Vedic Period (around 500 BCE) when it is said that the hand gestures were derived from holy men who used them for religious rituals. Buddhist scriptures included drawings of various Buddhas and deities, the recitation of formulas, passages for conducting memorial services and rites, and ways of interlacing the hands in mudra. The Esoteric teachings became infused with profound meaning as a result. Buddhism has drawn from a variety of sources as it evolved over time including deities, symbolism, language, and culture of not only India but all of the countries through which Buddhism has come.

Over time there became more diverse ways of focusing the attention on what is most essential in the Buddhist journey. From the priest's perspective, one's focus should be on the Bodhisattva vow (vow to save all sentient beings); however, being that this vow was ignored by many lay people, the Sangha (assembly of the ordained), began to implement various ways to guide followers who in most cases were illiterate. As a result, visual reminders were used in place of written text. These visual reminders included mandalas, statues, and of course mantra and mudra. Esoteric Buddhism in particular became invested with rich symbolism as a result which drew upon surrounding cultures.

Mudras of the Historical Buddha

Abaya Mudra

This is a gesture of the Historical Buddha which represents being 'without fear.' The right arm is bent at the elbow and the palm of the right hand faces outward at shoulder level. This mudra is made for the purpose of protection, and removing fear. The gesture is similar to a gesture used worldwide to indicate something should 'stop.' Because the fingers are pointed upwards, it is easy to remember that this is associated with the North.

Varada Mudra

This gesture means 'welcoming.' The left arm is draped over the legs while sitting in a lotus posture (crossed legs), and the left palm faces outward with the fingers pointing down. This gesture is used in statues and paintings to show that one will be granted

wishes if one welcomes Buddhism. It represents the kindness and generosity of Buddha. Since the fingers are pointing down it may easy to remember that this gesture is associated with the South.

Bhumisparsha Mudra

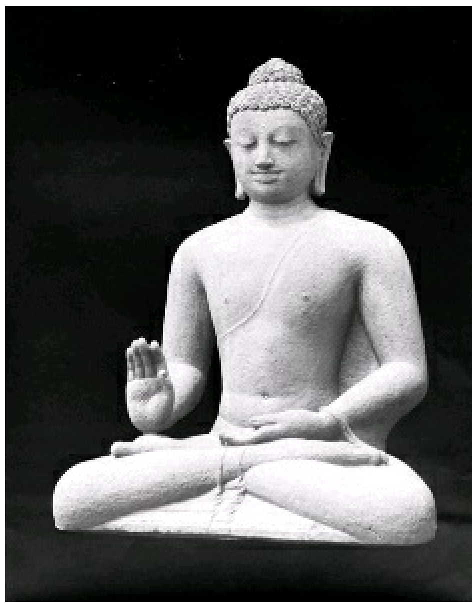
This gesture means ‘touching the Earth.’ To make this two-handed gesture, the left hand is placed palm up in the lap while the right hand points with the index finger to the Earth. This represents the Buddha ‘taking the Earth as his witness’ in his triumph over evil. From the point of view of the person sitting and doing meditation, the fingers of the left hand point to the right which correspond to the direction East.

Dhyana Mudra

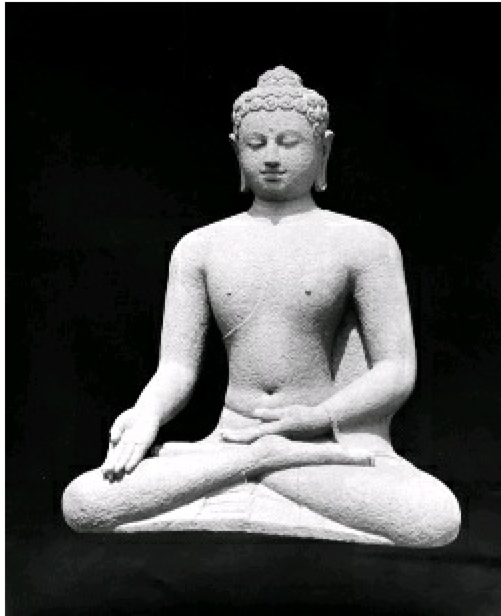
This gesture means “meditation.’ To make this two-handed gesture place the right hand on top of the left on the lap as one is seated in the lotus posture. The thumbs touch forming a triangular or round shape. This is the gesture of the Buddha in deep meditation and so it is used as a common way to meditate. As one places the right hand over the left, the fingers of the right hand point to the left which corresponds to the direction West.



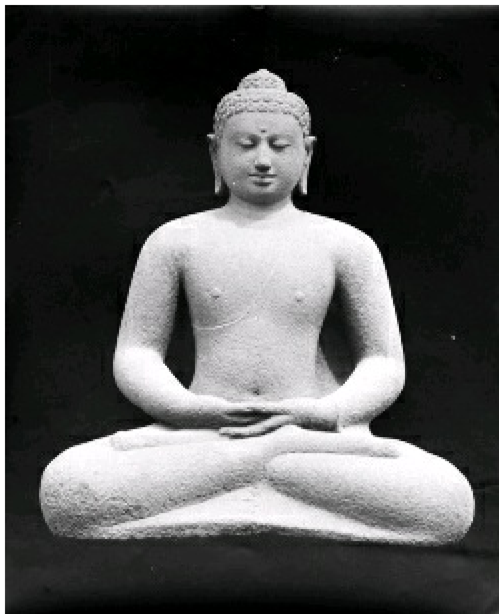
Dharmachakra Mudra
Seppou-In (Turning the Wheel of the Law Seal)



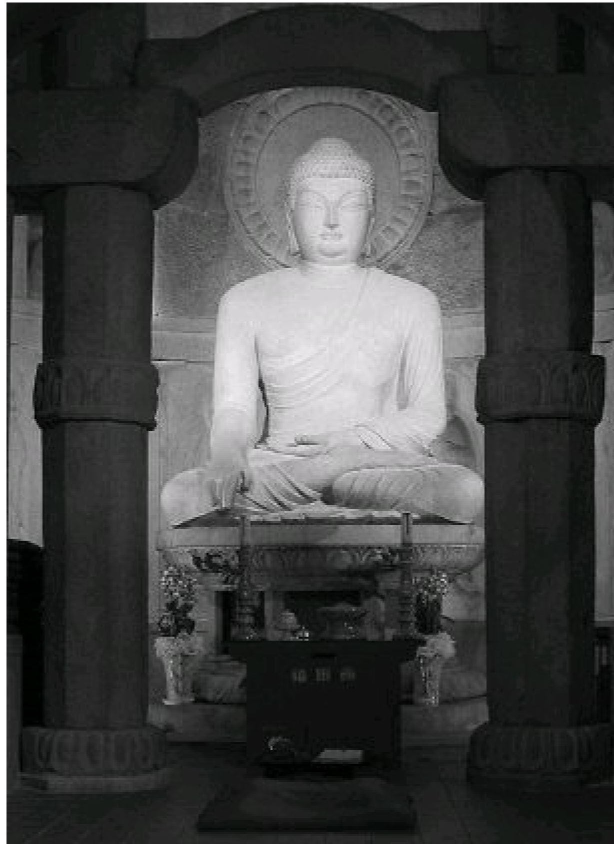
Abhaya Mudra
Semui-In (The Deliverer of Fearlessness Seal)



Varada Mudra
Yonkan-In (Gift Giving Seal)



Dhyana mudra
Tei-In (Fixed Seal)



Bhumisparsa Mudra
Shokuchi-In (Gouma In) Touching the Earth Seal

Dharmakaya

Buddhists believe that the Buddha did not die although they accept that his physical body perished. The *Dharmakaya* or 'True Body' lives on and is not subject to the restraints of time, space or matter. Out of this line of thinking various Buddhas developed which represented different qualities associated with the *Sakyamuni Buddha*. These different manifestations of Buddha are referred to as the five *Dhyani Buddhas*. Kukai taught that mudra are one manifestation of the Dharmakaya accessible to each person to use towards enlightenment.

Mahavairocana (Dainichi Nyorai)

Mahavairocana is a central figure of veneration in Shingon Buddhism and other esoteric sects. The deity represents the great cosmic illumination of wisdom and compassion. In Japanese, this deity is referred to as *Dainichi Nyorai* which means the 'Great Sun Buddha.' Dainichi Nyorai is the 'Bliss Body' manifestation of the Historical Buddha, and is at the center of the Five Buddhas.



Vajradhatu Mahavairocana
(Dainichi Buddha of the Diamond Realm)

When Mahavairocana grasps the left finger in front of the chest with his right fist, this mudra is known as Chiken-In. It represents being in harmony with the five elements (earth, water, fire, wind, void) and also the five Dhyani Buddhas. Hence, it is sometimes referred to as the Sixth Element Seal. The Sixth Element in this case is 'consciousness' and is symbolized by the vertical left finger. The elements are represented by the fingers of the right hand. This represents all living things being embraced by wisdom and compassion. Kukai explains,

> *"Each finger has a wonderful exchange from bodhisattvas, the little fingers have elasticity from the whisper of the universe's divine secrets, the movements of both hands are the great spirit that is the cause of things fusing together, tying the seals in meditative absorption (in a state of enlightenment one's life becomes immoveable) sensing the powers (realization) of various deities and obtaining them....." -Kukai*

Mental Symbolism of the Five Dhyani Buddhas

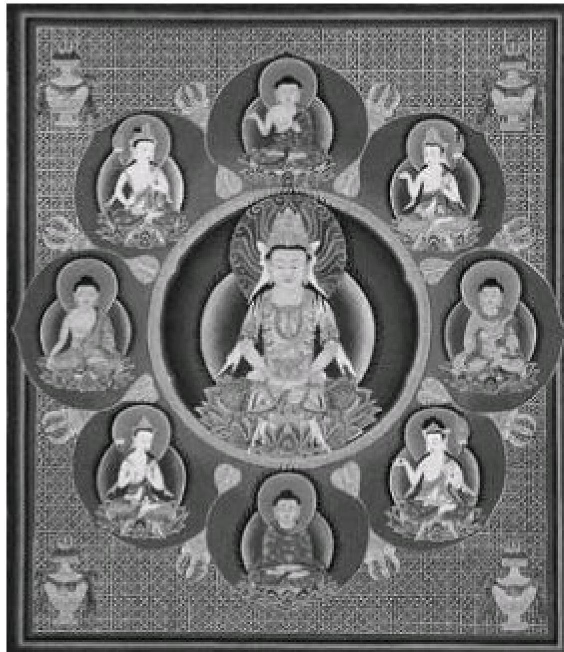
Ratnasambhava- pride and miserliness transformed into Wisdom of Equality

Akshobhya- anger and hatred transformed into Mirror-like Wisdom
Amitabha- desire and lust transformed into Discriminating Wisdom
Amogasiddhi- jealousy and fear transformed into All-accomplishing Wisdom
Vairochana- ignorance transformed into encompassing Dharmadatu Wisdom

Physical Symbolism of the Five Dhyani Buddhas
Deity, Element, Sense, Direction

Ratnasambhava- earth, smell, south
Akshobhya- water, sound, east
Amitabha- fire, taste, west
Amogasiddhi- air, touch, inner winds, north
Vairochana- void, sight, center

Universal Truth which could be termed Dharmakaya as well is the highest form of wisdom associated with the Vajradhatu Mahavairocana (Dai Nichi Nyorai) and the picture of the Chinken-in (Wisdom Fist Seal). That image is known to drive away ignorance and illusion and represents the strength and wisdom of Nirvana (The Pure Land), and the human world which is represented by the pointing finger.



A Japanese Mandala of the Five Dhyani Buddhas

Meaning of the Hands and Fingers

The Ten Fingers

The Ten Fingers are associated with the following:
Ten Peaks
Ten Natures of All Things
Ten Universes

Ten Sacred Lotuses
Ten Wheels
Ten Scales

<u>The Left Hand</u>

The left hand has the following associations:
Samadhi
Cessation
Good Fortune
Reason
Garbhadhatu (Womb Realm)
The World of Living Things
Moon

<u>Right Hand</u>

The left hand has the following associations:
Wisdom
Observation
Higher Knowledge
Vajradhatu (The Diamond Realm)
The Realm of Buddhas
Sun

The inner palm is associated with a full moon and a tiger's mouth. The nails are associated with armored helmets.

<u>Little Finger</u>

Element-Earth
Deity- Ratnasambhava
Sense-Smell
Body-Flesh
Organ-Spleen
Delusion-Pride
Wisdom-Wisdom of Equality
Direction-South
Mudra-Varada (Gift Bestowing)
Symbol-Jewel
Sacred Syllable-Tram
Color-Yellow
Physical Form
Faith

<u>Ring Finger</u>

Element-Water

Deity- Amogasiddhi
Sense-Sound
Body-Blood Flow
Organ-Kidney
Delusion-Anger, Hatred
Wisdom-Mirror-like Wisdom
Direction-East
Mudra- Bhumisparsa (Earth Touching)
Symbol-Vajra
Sacred Syllable-Hum
Color-Blue
Sensation
Diligence

Middle Finger

Element-Fire
Deity- Amitabha
Sense-Taste
Body-Body Heat
Organ-Liver
Delusion-Desire, Lust
Wisdom-Discriminating Wisdom
Direction-West
Mudra- Dhyana (Meditation)
Symbol-Lotus
Sacred Syllable-Hrih
Color-Red
Conscience
Remembrance

Index Finger

Element-Wind
Deity- Amogasiddhi
Sense-Touch
Body-Breath
Organ-Lungs
Delusion-Jealousy Fear
Wisdom-All Accomplishing Wisdom
Direction-North
Mudra- Abhaya (Fearlessness)
Symbol-Double Vajra
Sacred Syllable-Ah
Color-Green

Memory
Concentration

Thumb

Element-Void
Deity- Vairochana
Sense-Sight
Body-Energy Channels
Organ-Heart
Delusion-Ignorance, Delusion
Wisdom-All Encomassing Wisdom
Direction-Center
Mudra- Dharmachakra ‘Turning the Dharma Wheel’ (Teaching)
Symbol-Dharma Wheel
Sacred Syllable-Om
Color-White
Perception

Chapter 6

Sacred Sounds

The Meaning of Mantra

Mantra is a word of Sanskrit origin that originated with the Vedic traditions. In these sacred texts, metered praises to *Mahasvara* (The Supreme God) were recited in a repetitious fashion in order connect to the divine. Words were considered by the Vedic and early Hindu traditions as symbolic, holy and miraculous. By the late Vedic Period (around 600 to 1500 years ago BCE), compilations of chanted verses known as *Atharveda* were used to cure illness, exorcise demons, and to cast spells.

Speech is a characteristic that differentiates humans from the rest of the animal world. Our ability to vocalize our intentions through words was believed to connect us to wisdom and the fullness of divine consciousness. This knowledge was received and passed on through tradition by sages, and monks through direct transmission and through writings. Mantra developed as a way to convey thought signals to God according to each person's own incantation. The mantra in a sense became a vehicle through which one was united with divine consciousness.

The word mantra consists of two syllables which could be roughly translated as an 'instrument for the mind.' In other words, it is a tool to focus one's thoughts towards higher consciousness.

By the end of the Vedic Period, doing mantra for sorcery became prohibited but their use for this purpose however was still widespread. In Buddhism it was believed that using mantra for the host of problems arising from this worldly existence was not of any benefit in that it did not elevate one's consciousness toward the divine. Many mantra of this time were charms used for one form of protection or another.

The Origins of Mantra in Buddhism

In Chinese, the characters for this were translated as 'True Words.' In Japanese, that pronunciation is '*Shingon*.' Shingon of course is one of Esoteric Buddhist traditions of Japan. This tradition was transmitted to Japan by Mikkyo priests using mantra, and the meaning of these sacred words was expounded by Kukai.

In Shingon Buddhism, the character of each word's meaning is profound. As a word was transcribed from Sanskrit to Chinese or from Sanskrit to Japanese, syllables were chosen that matched the original pronunciation as closely as possible

According to Kukai, if one can settle the mind and have the right intention, words can become mantra and lead one to enlightenment. Kukai believed that by stopping the mind by

chanting mantra, one liberates oneself from *avidya* (fundamental ignorance which allows us to attain Buddha's *prajna* (wisdom). Shingon was not a path in which enlightenment was dependent upon one's deeds, but rather breaking through one's own limits to higher consciousness so that one becomes united with the Dainichi Buddha. Through the use of mudra and mantra, one attains the consciousness of Dainichi Nyorai.

Repetition is used in Shingon to hold the consciousness in concentration, and the rhythmical undulation of the Sanskrit language vibrates the practitioner's consciousness into harmony so that the ego-consciousness is dissolved, allowing the practitioner a realization of his true mind.

The mantras of Esoteric Buddhism have their origins in the *Dharmakaya* or 'True Body of Buddha.' The Dharmakaya is essentially the eternal body of Buddha that lives without the restraints of the earthly cycle of birth and death. It is not personal but rather cosmic is scope. Kukai believed that the Dharamakaya (cosmic consciousness) is inherently within the mantra, and dispel ignorance (*avidya*) leading one to enlightenment (*prajna*).

The Three Mysteries

Sanmitsu refers to the 'Three Mysteries' in which Thought, Word and Action are intermingled with the Dharmakaya as Kukai eloquently explains,

> "*Regarding the Three Mysteries, the first is entirely a bodily mystery (the body is an expression of one's deeds), regarding the second mystery of speech (speech as represented by language resulting in the mysteries of the mouth), and finally the third is the mystery of the mind (mental stability of one's thoughts as an expression of one's actions). The Three Mysteries are the activity of the Dharmakaya (Dharma Body), and are extremely profound yet small symbols of the highest levels of a Bodhisattava in which one comes as close to becoming a Buddha as possible. By this the mystery is called to reason."*

Thoughts, words and deeds have been referred to as '*Sangou*' (Three Actions) which constitute one's karma. Karma produces the impetus for reincarnation, but according to Kukai one must not think in these negative terms. Rather, the Three Mysteries are an expression of the Dharmakaya and Buddha's actions, speech and thought. In this way, attainment of buddhahood is understandable and attainable for the ordinary person.

> *"This is the reason the mantra of Mikkyo are known. If the devotees of Dharmakaya and the Three Mysteries make observances, perform mudra and mantra, the highest state of Buddhism will reside in the heart. The Three Mysteries are suitable for each person to attain Buddhist enlightenment at once so that illumination is actualized."*

> *"The innermost heart of the Buddhist faith is the 'Heart of Buddha.' The self becomes aware of existence by serving others compassionately. Thereby, one feels*

the true consciousness as it was understood for the first time by the 'Illuminated Buddha.' In Buddhism, salvation through others versus salvation through oneself makes for a good argument, but finally one could say that 'mantra' amount to the strength of self and others as two indivisible states of being. One is able to realize that nothing is separated from one's own body. If that is the case, one is able to become a Buddha in this life time."

-Kukai

Mahavairocana Sutra

The earliest known text of Esoteric Buddhism is the Mahavairocana Sutra which was written in India during the 7th Century. What we know of the sutra come from Chinese and Tibetan translations which use Siddham script. The sutra is central to Shingon Buddhism and is frequently referred to by Kukai in many of his writings. Interestingly, the Mahavairocana Sutra provides the reader with many incantations for a variety of different purposes. It is clear that at the time, these incantations were used for protection from worldly danger as well as spiritual advancement. Next are some examples from the sutra.

Mantra of Sakyamuni Buddha

namah samanta buddhanam mam

Mantra of All Buddhas

namah samanta-buddhanam sarvatha vimati-jikirana dharmadhatu-nirjata sam sam sam ha swaha

Mantra to Remove All Obstructions

namah samanta-buddhanam asame trisame samaye swaha

Mantra to Dainichi Nyorai who Conquers Evil in All Realms

namah samanta-buddhanam ah vi ra hum kham

Omnipotent and Omnipresent Sounds

OM is mentioned in Vedic literature as being the mother of all sounds. It is sometimes written AUM which actually contains three sounds within a sound. These three parts are A, U, and M. The silence following is considered a fourth part. When this primordial sound is spoken one opens the mouth and allows the first A to resonate. The A harmonizes into the U, and then U harmonizes and transform into M. The result is a vibratory sound that one can actually feel in the head.

According to the Vedas, in the beginning there was only Brahman (God). God existed in the form of pure divine consciousness. In Hinduism and Buddhism there exists the concept of *namarupa. Nama* is something's 'essence' whereas '*rupa*' is the object's manifestation in physical form. It is believed by Hindus and Buddhists that Brahman as pure consciousness was 'nama' and his manifestation was first in the 'rupa' (form) of the syllable AUM. Through the vibrations of this sound, other primordial sounds arose giving rise to creation.

"As leaves are held together by a spike, so all speech is held together by AUM."

- Chandogya Upanishad (2.23.3)

Seed Syllables

In Esoteric Buddhists texts you will sometimes hear of 'seed syllables.' These are typically one or two syllable words that are sometimes found within a longer mantra or chant. Seed syllables by themselves may not have any particular meaning but they are intended to carry the vibration or resonance of the mantra itself. *Om* is an example of a seed syllable. These syllables in a sense are like abbreviated mantras. In addition, each syllable corresponds to specific Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas.

When Kukai made his journeys to China to study Tantric Buddhism it became necessary to be able to read texts that transcribed accurately the sounds of the original Sanskrit pronunciation. Kukai used a type of phonetic script known as *Siddham* script which is also called *Bonji* in Japanese. This script was used in Northern India from around 600-1200 CE. He used these letters so that the true and accurate pronunciation of mantra could be recited.

The Power of Words

Words and sounds have the unique ability to completely change our mood. Our brains are wired to receive and process auditory information which is then routed to other parts of the brain where it stimulates a host of memories, feeling and connections. This in turn has an effect on our endocrine system which can affect the function or dysfunction of a variety of organs.

You have the power to change your own life significantly through speech and sound. The voice that you hear inside forms the words you are about to say. Those words have the power to heal or injure, and it is your choice how to use them. If you allow sound to become a source of agitation to your mind, that will have a negative effect upon your physiology as neurotransmitters and hormones cascade into your bloodstream and reinforce receptor sites on your cells that reinforce similar patterns for the future.

Siddham Calligraphy by Kukai

Chapter 7

The Choice of Consciousness

The Evolution of Consciousness

We look to science to explain how our world works according to natural laws governing physical matter. Ideas about consciousness pose a problem for the rational mind which doubts the existence of that which cannot be quantified through measurable scientific means. The world's major religions came from a time long before the Age of Reason in which faith in gods served the spiritual needs of largely illiterate masses. Since these religions still survive this level of consciousness also survives. It survives in people of faith who in countries all over the world believe in a more literal interpretation of their myths and religions and who support values that are considered traditional.

Largely because of science, a shift in consciousness has occurred over the last few hundred years that discounted the mythologies of the world's great religions. The quest to conquer the world's resources was also a quest to name, label and categorize everything. This way of thinking tallied this knowledge to the credit of individuals, countries, and empires. The result was scientific materialism and we still have not moved past it. In many western countries, a great shift away from the world religions and traditional values has occurred. This has resulted in a rise in atheism as an informed alternative to religion and the further development of psychology to logically explain the human mind.

More so in the later parts of the 20th Century we start to see another change in consciousness. There is renewed interest in what different cultures, religions and belief systems have to offer. Groups previously marginalized by traditional groups began to demand equal rights. These changes came with many other social changes that are now mainstream, at least in the United States, but at the time seemed quite revolutionary.

Cultures do not shift all at once in terms of consciousness. The process is gradual. In America today, the population in mainly made up of these three previously mentioned groups, and depending on where you live you might find more of one particular group.

The problem that arises is that no one belongs completely to any one group. They all exist and every one fits more or less into each category. It is just that some people identify more closely with one stage of how consciousness developed more than another. The result is that the public is in many ways divided as some members either demand or resist change. What is lost in the process is the ability to respect other ways of thinking, living and believing. Being socially progressive does not automatically mean that one becomes tolerant of others. In fact quite the opposite more often than not occurs. Regardless of whether one is more traditional or progressive, groups are threatened by one another's existence.

The consciousness of the future hopefully will reflect a caring world view. Currently, the world is a juxtaposition of diversity because of communication technologies that cause conflicting beliefs to clash openly in the mix that is the Information Age. The advantage of this age might be that for the first time, knowledge can be shared like no other time in

history providing unlimited possibilities for each individual to pursue ideas that would have been impossible to pursue earlier in human history.

Individual Consciousness

The individual who asks who am I, and is faced with confusion. Certainly, one of previously mentioned groups must be right. To the traditionalist who believes in Jesus, Yahweh or Allah, the answer is clear. We were created in our creator's image and our consciousness was formed to serve and love the divine. For the man/woman of reason this view may seem infantile. They may see consciousness as simply the firing of neurons in certain parts of the cerebral cortex. A person who believes that life is only about what one can acquire materially may never see any need to pursue spiritual studies.

Each perspective can make sense to a person who thinks in these terms. Rather than asking who is right and who is wrong, perhaps more could be gaining from seeing what different points of view have to offer. When I wrote this book I felt the necessity to explain what Kuji-In was according to the traditions which produced it. Without understanding the background of context, much of their meaning is lost. It is too easy for someone in these times to read about something like this only through the eyes of the present. Therefore, later in the book when I discuss particular deities being associated with the practice of Kuji-In, realize that this presented a unique problem for me. Do I write it only for those who will read this in a very literal sense? Will people only take the deities presented metaphorically? Will people from a more scientific approach just look at this as outdated mysticism? All of these conclusions are possible I guess.

My real intention was to provide a context in which the deities presented in this book could be taken both literally and metaphorically. People will be drawn to either interpretation or dismiss both interpretations. It's really up to the individual. In deriving meaning, in a sense, we cannot escape the possibilities that may occur because of the time period we are in.. On the other hand, each individual will determine meaning according to their own journey.

Group consciousness is the collective sum of all individual consciousnesses. Each is shaped by internal and external factors for the individual and by internal and external factors within the society at large.

From the Buddhist perspective, consciousness is not dependent upon matter. The two interact spontaneously and work together interdependently. As the material body forms, with it too is the interaction with consciousness. From a worldly perspective, consciousness seems limited to 'self' perhaps because conditioning has reinforced the paradigm of satisfying our own selfish needs for survival first. Our conception of the world is one built around us in layers from the center out as if we were the center of the universe. As consciousness is confined and defined as only being within the scope of the ego self, higher conscious seems as abstract and as foreign to us as anything else outside of our own private universe. .

Manifestation and Reality

A change in consciousness can affect matter. I am not talking about mind over matter in the sense of moving object or bending nails with the mind. I am talking about how artifacts

are manifestations of the consciousness of the cultures that produce them. For instance, if one were to compare a cave painting from Lascaux, the Mona Lisa by DiVinci, and Marilyn by Andy Warhol, one could see immediately that each artist's expression in part a representation of the consciousness of both the individual and culture of the time. The same could be said of other art forms such as architecture, music, and literature no name only a few.

If one can change one's own consciousness to affect aspects of the material world, then one might wonder if it is possible to change the world in some greater and more significant way either individually or collectively through consciousness. Many people throughout history have started with a simple idea that once fully realized and expressed through action has had enormous impact upon the rest of the world. A spark of creativity, like a spore lucky enough to fall on fertile ground, may later manifest abundantly.

Unfortunately, most people even if well intentioned may only try to manifest what they perceive as being best in their own self-interest. This is the consciousness of the self speaking and not higher consciousness. Many wars have been fought in which both sides were convinced that God was on their side. However, God cannot be on two sides at once. Therefore, in order to manifest reality from consciousness, one must leave behind the ego and individual consciousness and merge with higher consciousness. This means a profound penetration of the truth of what is and what could be. It means aligning oneself to a consciousness beyond one's self-conception.

> *Mind precedes matter. This is Vedantic theory. Matter precedes mind. This is scientific theory. Mind can be said to be immaterial only in the sense that it has not the characteristics of ponder-able matter. It is not, however, immaterial in the sense that Brahman (Pure Spirit) as such is. Mind is the subtle form of matter and hence the prompter of the body. -. Swami Sivandi*

One might ask, if this is true then why can't we manifest great fortunes for ourselves from our wishes alone? The mind's influence upon matter is a subtle one. It is subtle yet existent none the less. Subtle energy must still work within the confines of natural laws. Another reason why doubt is cast upon examples of 'mind over matter' is the seemingly lack evidence that anyone can possess and demonstrate any such skill with any degree reliability under careful observation. Training the subtle energy of the mind is a task that takes practice. Yogis and Zen masters have often demonstrated remarkable control over their own mind and physiology. In addition, to practice one needs suitable instruction as one would with the development of any unfamiliar skill. Is it possible that the person reading this could throw a baseball and hit an apple sitting on a fence post at a distance of twenty feet? Of course it is possible but it is not likely with any degree of confidence. With proper training and focus one may be eventually able to hit the ball more and more exceeding the rate at which any beginner might achieve.

Chapter 8

Rituals of the Kuji

Kuji

The Kuji represent a way of blending one's own consciousness with higher consciousness through the use of prescribed vibratory sounds. Kuji is made up of two words 'ku' and 'ji' which mean 'nine' and 'characters' respectively. Each character represents an affirmation that corresponds to a particular mudra and mantra. The word character in this context refers to a written word as in the Chinese language. In their brevity, the characters represent a complete affirmation that is carried out as a ritual involving Sanmitsu (The Three Mysteries). The name of each of the nine mudra is as follows:

Rin, Pyo, Toh, Sha, Kai, Jin, Retsu, Zai, Zen

Kuji-In

Forming the seals described previously and repeating their mantra with specific focus on the deities and one's intention is known as Kuji-In. This book will focus on only one of these rituals although there are many others for a variety of purposes. To perform this ritual, clear the mind and while sitting in *seiza,* (sit Japanese style) bring the hands together. Clearly focus on your intention and repeat the name of each seal followed by the mantra for each. This book will provide the Sanskrit pronunciation of the mudra.

Kuji-Kiri

As an abbreviated ritual form of Kuji, one may also cut a Kuji pattern in the air in front of you. This practice may have its roots in Shamanism. In any case, one extends the index and middle fingers of the right hand forming what appears to be a sword. To begin this ritual sit in seiza and bring the extended 'sword fingers' of the right hand to one's left side. Wrap the fingers of the left hand around the sword fingers as if to sheathe the sword. With focus draw the right hand out horizontally cutting a line through the air and vocalize the first syllable 'Rin' forcefully. Then, cut downwards crossing the first cut with a vertical cut saying loudly 'Pyo.' This process is repeated until a grid is cut in the air in front of you. This grid is like a net or matrix which sends out one's intentions through one's interdependent connection with everything. Once the last horizontal stroke 'Zen' is cut one completes may write one's intention in the center. A final thrust of the right hand finishes the ritual and sends one's intention

Kuji Goshin Ho

Kuji Goshin Ho translates as the 'Kuji Self-Protection Method.' It is essentially a ritual to protect one from harm using Sanmitsu. Of course, as I have already explained, Buddhism since its conception absorbed secular uses of mantra and mudra into practice for such purposes as self-protection. The Dharma (Buddha's Teachings/Path) must be protected, as forces of darkness and ignorance would otherwise seek to destroy them. Fierce guardians such as Fudo Myoo, which will be discussed later, help to serve this purpose. This ritual or ones like it have been used for centuries by monks and warriors for personal protection and spiritual refinement. Therefore, the ritual itself should not be seen as a trivial

matter. To treat it as such would mean not really believing that it has any effect in the first place. According to Kukai, by tying such seals and repeating their mantra one becomes in direct communication with the deities called upon by way of the Three Mysteries of Sanmitsu. To perform this ritual one is essentially enlisting the help of deities within the spirit world who may be in communication with you by performing this ritual, but may not necessarily do your bidding for you. Please review each section of the Eightfold Path to examine one's conscience and to see if what one is requesting is justly motivated.

The nine mudra performed in this set are all symbolic. Each represents in outer appearance certain ritual objects such as Vajra (Thunderbolt of Wisdom), Ratna (Jewel) or Dharmachakra (Wheel of the Law) to name just a few. In addition to these outward symbols, the tying of the fingers stimulate energy channels within the body. Together in the sequence that they are performed represents one ascending into higher consciousness. Looking at the Kuji in this manner, the deities may represent aspects of one's own consciousness rather than a supernatural force. The symbolism then serves to focus the mind to elevate consciousness.

Exercise

Learning the Seals

Already in this book the mudra may have been referred to as 'seals.' This comes from the Japanese character used to write this word. In Chinese and Japanese, the character means 'seal' but can also mean 'stamp' or 'impression.' Though the binding of the fingers is a physical activity, the seal that is produced is meant to make an affirmation done with certainty that makes an 'impression' upon the person. The impression that is imprinted on the consciousness is the wisdom and compassion of the Dharmakaya.

We will discuss the deeper meanings of the seals at a later point. At this time however, it is best to practice saying the incantation you previously learned in an earlier exercise with the seals you have learned in this chapter. Before practicing the seals rub your hands vigorously together as if you were warming your hands. This will invigorate them and is said to make the practice more effective. Though I cannot speak to the validity of this, I will say that rubbing the hands together will prevent your hands from sticking together uncomfortably and make transitioning from each mudra easier. Practice these seals until you can perform them easily from memory along with each part of the incantation.

Begin the ritual with Gassho as seen on the next page. Then form the mudra and repeat the name of the Kuji such as 'Rin' and so on until you finish all nine.

Kango Gassho (Joined Palms of the Diamond Realm)

(chant)

Tan ajichaya marishiya sowaka



The *Kango Gassho* (Diamond Joined Palms) is also called the *Anjali Mudra* in Sanskrit. The mudra is a 'Gesture of Reverence' that became the foundation of the hand seal system as explained in the Mahavairocana Sutra. From this mudra thousands more arise. The left hand is associated with the 'moon' side of the body and the right hand is associated with the 'sun' side of the body. Joining the hands in this fashion, one joins the energy of both sides of the body into a common circuit. One also should think of joining consciousness with matter, the relative with the absolute, and the self with the divine.

Rin

The first seal in this set of nine is known as Dokko-In which means 'Thunderbolt Seal.' Begin by putting the hands together as if in prayer. Join the thumbs and middle fingers into interlocking rings while extending the index fingers.





Pyo

This seal is known as Daikongorin-In which means 'Great Diamond Wheel Seal.' This mudra is formed by bending both middle fingers and putting them up over the index fingers of the last seal Rin. The diamond is formed by the index fingers and the wheel or 'ring' is formed by the thumbs and middle fingers.



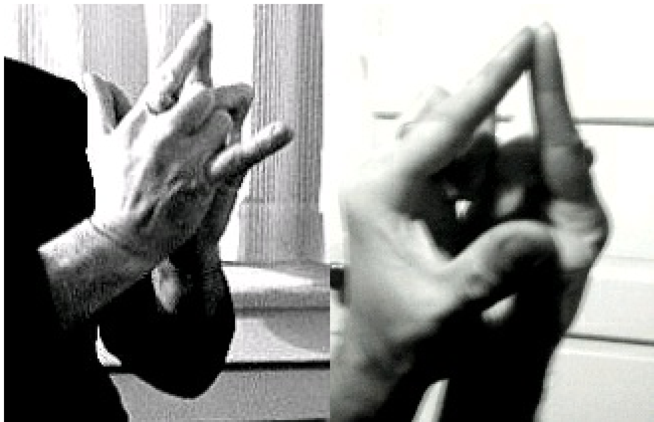
To.

This seal is known as Gejishi-In which means 'Outer Lion Seal.' After completing the last seal, straighten all of the fingers back to the praying hands position. Now move the left index finger in between the right ring and middle finger, and move the right index finger in between the left ring and index finger. Finally, bend the middle fingers of both hands to curl around and over the tops of the index fingers. This seal should resemble the outward facing face of a lion or dog. The ring and index fingers open to form the mouth



Sha

This seal is called Naijishi-In which means 'Inner Lion Seal.' From the last seal open both hands to a praying hands position and then transition into the mudra by placing the thumbs together. Then cross both ring fingers so that the left ring fingers go in between the right middle and index fingers. Likewise, the right ring finger should at the same time go in between the left middle and index fingers. Now join the index fingers. The result is a lion facing inward at you. The thumbs and index fingers form the mouth.



Kai

This is known as Gebaku-In which means 'Outer Bond Seal.' From the last seal return the hands to the praying hand position momentarily before folding the fingers so that they laced together as shown. The folding of the fingers forms the bond.



Jin

This fist is known as Naibaku-In or 'Inner Bond Seal.' From the last seal, loosen the fingers and move the palms away from each other slightly to allow all of the fingertips to bend inward inside the palms. The thumb and index fingers of each will form two interlocking rings.



Retsu

This seal is called Chiken-In which means 'Wisdom Seal.' From the last seal open the fingers and straighten the index finger of the left so that it faces up vertically. Grasp the left index finger with fingers of the right hand. The left index finger, right index finger and right thumb should all meet. The left thumb is tucked into the palm of the right hand. This represents being surrounded by wisdom like the index fingers is surrounded by the fingers of the right hand.



Zai

This seal is known as Nichirin-In which means 'Sun Ring Seal.' From the last seal, spread the hands apart to form a triangular shape with the space formed by the index fingers and thumbs. The other are splayed apart. This center represents the Sun and fingers represent a corona of light emitting as rays.



Zen

This seal is called Onmyo-In which means 'Invisible Seal.' From the last seal, close the hand into a fist and cover it with the right hand. The closed fist could represent the Sun and the other hand the moon. The idea that is represented is something being invisible because it is hidden by something else as in the case of an eclipse.



Technique to Restore the Kuji

I offer this sincerely as the gods of heaven and earth have descended without exception… multitudes of gods…before the main shrine I humbly ask that we may receive your heavenly blessing and protect us from all kinds of calamities and bring us good fortune. Disembark and return to the shrines where you reside.

(Prayer from Kuji Goshin Ho manual)

On kiri kyara hara hara futaran posotsu sowaka

Chapter 9

Heaven Descends

Spiritual Protection

Taoists sages summoned the Six Celestial Generals, but later in Japan Buddhist priests and warriors called upon a spiritual army derived from Buddhism. Now that you have learned how to form the mudra of the Kuji Goshin Ho ritual smoothly and have some idea of their basic meaning as symbols, we will now reveal a way that they were used historically by both priests and warriors and a way they can be adapted.

According to the Chinese classic '*The Art of War*' by Sun Tzu, "The superior tactician defeats his enemy without fighting." The Kuji Goshin Ho ritual and others that are similar to it were used for just this purpose. In a material sense this is done with strategy that is based on such factors as planning, use of the terrain, and materials, but as Sun Tzu points out, despite the importance of material factors, victory is determined at the level of consciousness first. Victory in a physical sense then follows:

> *"The military is of great consequence to a nation. It is the foundation of death and life. It is a Way to examine existence and mortality. Therefore, it is important to go over five determining factors and consider the outcome of one's plans. First is the Way. Second is Heaven. Third is Earth. Fourth is the Commander. Fifth are Natural Laws." (Sun Tzu, The Art of War: Chapter 1: Planning)*

The Way is considered a source or guiding principle of nature. It cannot be entirely known or understood but it can however be followed. Because the universe uses natural laws in order to function, the material world is a manifestation of the Way from the level of subatomic particles to the expanding universe. Understanding how matter interacts gives us insight into the course of the Way. Our own understanding however is fundamentally flawed because out of all that exists we see only a small portion of the available information and from this information our brains can only interpret what we choose to see. Therefore, our understanding of the Way can never be entirely understood, but only glimpsed.

The Way could be thought of as 'dynamic consciousness.' By that I mean that the Way is a form of higher consciousness that makes choices according to natural laws. Our own consciousness is very limited by comparison. Our choices seem to have very little effect on a universe much greater than ourselves, and so looking at our world it is easy to feel powerless. The mind learns routines and habits that condition us to think and act in prescribed ways to affect our environments in ways that are familiar. This causes us to operate in daily life using personal consciousness or ego as it is sometimes called. The ego as a 'consciousness' is self-limiting and highly distractible. Higher consciousness serves to take us out of the confines of our own ego, and even if this happens partially, as if consciousness were a tiny ray of light in an otherwise darkened room, the affects can be quite significant.

The Inner Battle

To achieve a military, spiritual or personal victory necessitates going beyond self-imposed

limitations. Our own conditioned responses and habitual behaviors produce a sense of our own identity tethering us more often than not to the material world with little interest in what lies beyond. This ‘material identity’ is what people equate with being their ‘true selves.’ Whether one looks within or looks to the heavens, a transformation of how one views the ‘true self’ is required. The mudra and mantra of Esoteric Buddhism bring the practitioner out of the realm of consciousness experienced in daily life to attune with higher consciousness. In the process, the ego driven self dissolves as one begins to see that it is essentially an empty construct of a limiting mind.

Deities as they appear in Mahayana Buddhism are often not historical figures. They typically represent different manifestations of higher consciousness. Close your eyes and for a moment and think of Mother Theresa... Can you picture her? She was a real person. Is she still a real person? She is more than the human remains that were put to rest. Perhaps in thinking of her we see her image and all that it represents-a feeling born of consciousness present within us but from outside of ourselves. What the deities summoned in the Kuji ritual represent are aspects of higher consciousness that may be present within ourselves, but are not nurtured sufficiently to take us outside of our own consciousness. Outside of our ego and our worldly wants and needs, the deities are real in a different sense. They represent the ‘better angels of our nature’ as Abraham Lincoln once so eloquently said.

The Kuji Affirmation of
Rin Pyo To Sha Kai Jin Retsu Zai Zen

臨
call
兵
the army
闘
to battle
者
persons
皆
all
陳
arranged
列
in columns
在
in
前
front

Summon the army of warriors, each arranged in columns to lead the way to battle.

Protective Deities of the Buddha

There are three protective deities known as Vajrapani, Avalokitesvara and Manjusri. They each represent different attributes or qualities of a Buddha.

Vajrapani means ‘Thunderbolt in the Hands’. Vajrapani represents the great power of a Buddha set into action. This power is used to overcome evil and ignorance wherever it may be found. The deity is a relentless force in the conquest of all negativity. Therefore, he is often pictured as a wrathful manifestation.

Avalokitesvara means ‘The Lord Looks Down.’ Avalokitesvara represents the great compassion of a Buddha. This compassion allows the deity to know how each person feels and hear each person’s cry for help. Avalokitesvara is often pictured with multiple arms, heads and faces so that he can listen and extend his arms to help others. He is sometimes referred to a Kuanyin in Chinese and Kannon in Japanese and is often represented in a feminine manifestation.

Manjusri means something like ‘Gentle Glory.’ Manjusri represents the great wisdom of a Buddha. He sits upon a lotus that represents perfect wisdom and enlightenment. He holds a double edged sword which cuts through all lies with truth and wisdom. In some pictures he is seen sitting on a blue lion which represents taming the mind. In other pictures, a sun can be seen behind him representing eternal illumination.

Mantras for these Deities

Vajrapani

namah samanta-vajranam vah

Avalokitesvara

namah samanta-buddhanam sah

Manjusri

namah samanta-buddhanam mam

Symbolism of the Nine Kuji Deities

There are nine Kuji and nine deities associated with them. Some represent the fierceness of the guardian Vajripani. Some represent the love and compassion of Avalokitevara. Finally, some represent the wisdom of Manjusri. We will now investigate each one and hopefully shed light on their significance. In addition, we will look into why their symbolism sheds light on how they are used to manifest positive changes in our own lives and the lives of those around us.

Deities, Mantra and Meanings

Rin

Purpose-Strength
Mantra- Om vajra manthya swaha
(Hail, the Diamond Stirs)
Jp-On baishira mantaya sowaka

Symbolism-A Tool of Empowerment



Dokko-in Mudra

Steadfastness

Seek clarity where there is moral ambiguity.

Find the truth presented in all opposing points of view.

Be steadfast when everything around you is in chaos.

The Meaning of Rin

The character for Rin means ‘to face’ or ‘call upon.’ Rin represents gathering one’s own internal strength and fortitude. It could also represent the gathering together of both physical and metaphysical forces to assist in the completion of a task. When using the Kuji in its original context as a protective charm, Rin is used to call upon assistance.

The mudra for Rin is Dokko-in or ‘Thunderbolt Seal.’ This is a direct reference to the *Vajra*. A Vajra is a scepter or primitive type weapon which represents protection and indestructible truth. Like a diamond it is capable of cutting through that which seems to be impenetrable. Vajra also means ‘thunderbolt’ which is an iconic symbol of the Hindu god Indra. Like Jupiter, Indra represents a god of strength who wields power and influence over the Earth. The fingers of the mudra are woven to represent this basic vajra shape. The index fingers in the mudra are prominent and are introduced here first along with the thumb playing a key role in the seal representing the gathering of strength that is personified in the guardian deity *Vaisravana*..

> *“At that time the heavenly king Vaishravana, protector of the world, said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, I too think compassionately of living beings and shield and guard these teachers of the Law, and therefore I pronounce these dharanis." Then he pronounced these spells: atte natte nunatte anada nade kunadi*
>
> *-Lotus Sutra Ch. 26*



Vajra- Diamond, Thunderbolt

The Associated Deity

Vaisravana, the Guardian King of the North, is known for granting wealth to those with good intentions who are willing to propagate the Dharma or “Buddhist Way.” For this he offers his protection. He is seen in many depictions holding a parasol and a mongoose. The mongoose which kills snakes is a symbol of good triumphing over evil. In Japan, a manifestation of Vaisravana known as *Bishamonten* is often depicted in statues particularly in front of temples where he is a guardian. Bishamonten is known as the “God of Warriors.” He carries a pagoda in one hand representing good fortune and a pole weapon in the other hand representing his readiness to defend others.



Bishamonten (Warrior Guardian)

The deity Bishamonten epitomizes the strength of a warrior and guardian. He is a figure that represents the strength of character and determination necessary to do what is right in spite of any obstacles blocking one’s path. He rewards those generously who walk the path of righteousness. As you meditate upon Kuji 1 imagine yourself standing as Bishamonten with all obstacles that impede your progress such as fear, anger, lust, or

ignorance held under foot.

The goal of using Rin is to apply focus and concentration to aspects of our life where there are weaknesses. Over time our ability to stay with activities that are beneficial can increase over time as we show more strength and determination.

Visualization Practice

The Sword of Truth

Look at your index fingers held vertically and then close your eyes. Imagine a vajra or double-edged sword. Imagine that the sword represents undeniable truth and wisdom. It represents all that is true and right in this world. The sword becomes illuminated and radiates beams of brilliant light in all directions. Imagine this sword passing over your body and melting away any fears and replacing these feelings with courage and determination. Everything the sword touches turns to light.

Application of Rin

Rin teaches restraint, self-discipline and patience. These are inner strengths that are developed by being vigilant in guarding one's own mind. Strength is derived from knowing not only when to act but also knowing when not to act.

> Impatience, indolence, faint-heartedness,
> And likewise haughty speech and insolence,
> It is then that like a log you should remain,
> -Shantideva

Here some examples of times when Rin meditation would be particularly useful:

- when one is unable to focus the mind
- when one lacks physical or mental strength
- when one has trouble sticking with a task
- when one needs security or stability
- when one must show patience or resolve
- when one requests protection

Making Sense of Difficulties

When problems arise in life with situations one encounters, one can gain clarity by asking...

> Is this helping me to grow as a person or is it weakening me?
> Is this helping anyone to grow as a person or is it weakening others?

Making a Personal Affirmation

At any moment one can stop and reflect to train the mind to be conscientious by affirming...

> I am the divine diamond,
> I am the truth that crushes all illusions.
> I am a person of determination and character.

I am fearless.
I stand up for what is right.
I am secure being who I am.

Prayers for Others

May all beings learn self-discipline.
May all beings become strong in body and mind.
May all beings develop an enduring spirit.
May all beings become courageous.
May all beings become resilient in times of hardship.
May all beings become unflinching in the face of danger.
May all beings become purged of their faults.
May all beings find strength in times of weakness.
May all beings find the courage not to give up.
May all beings show determination.
May all beings become builders and not destroyers.
May all beings be masters of themselves.
May all beings stand up for justice.
May all beings defend those who cannot defend themselves.

Pyo

Purpose-<u>Transformative Power</u>
Om ishnaya yantraya swaha
(Hail, the Instrument of the Lord)
Jp-On ishanaya intaraya sowaha

Symbolism-The Power to Initiate Change



Daikongourin-in Mudra

Transformation

Each moment of each day is a new opportunity.
The past cannot be changed but how you perceive it can motivate you or inhibit

you.

You have the ability to change your life by changing your thoughts.

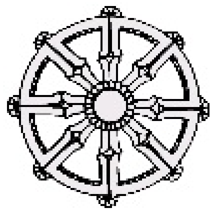
Happiness is a state of mind.

Happiness is a verb not a noun.

The Meaning of Pyo

One mudra lays the foundation for the next. In this case, strength has been affirmed. Manifest this physically, mentally and spiritually. It is your choice as a human being deserving of this power. In bodily terms, that means Prajna (Vital Energy) can be gathered into the body. In spiritual terms, it means one has summoned help but have not yet mobilized it. The character for Pyo means 'soldier' or 'army.' Historically one spiritually summoned an army for one's defense with this Kuji ritual. Pyo sets the gathered strength into motion and commissions it.

The mudra contains the projecting index fingers as found in the Rin mudra, but now the middle fingers form rings over the index fingers that are introduced forming a Vajra (Thunderbolt) that pierces the two rings formed by the middle fingers and thumbs. The rings could symbolize the circulation of energy, air, blood and lymph throughout the body. It could also represent the cycling of fresh new energy. In Buddhism the word *mandala* means 'circle' and this forms the Buddhist concept of the universe. The ring shape represents how life is by nature cyclical and also subject to change and transformation. This mudra takes away the impediments to change and stagnation.



Dharmachakra Mandala

The mudra for Pyo is the Daikongourin-in or "Great Diamond Wheel Seal." This is a direct reference to the Dharmachakra or 'Wheel of the Law.' It is said that this wheel was given to Buddha by the god Indra, and when Buddha began to preach, the wheel began to turn. It is a symbol that represents Buddhism in general, but we will briefly look at its deeper significance. Wheels set things into motion creating power and momentum. This is the real significance in terms of Buddhist iconography. The Dharma (Natural Laws of Buddhism) is a set of divine principles if you will that have been set into motion or activated. These principles represent the path out of pain, ignorance, and suffering plaguing human existence.



Juichimen Kannon
(Eleven Headed Goddess of Mercy)

The Associated Deity

The deity associated with this mudra is Ju-Ichi Kannon who is also known as the 'Eleven Headed Goddess of Mercy.' The being is a bodhisattava or "being that vows to save all others." The deity has ten heads with the eleventh head being the head of Buddha. Each head represents the ten stages or progressions to becoming a Buddha, but also represents the deity's ability to listen and to feel the pains of others while transforming into a form that is unique to each individual. This deity then represents the power of personal transformation from a person living by ignorance to a person living by wisdom.

As you meditate upon Kuji 2 imagine yourself standing as Juichi Kannon whose form may change constantly as the deity morphs into whatever form that brings wisdom and compassion to all. Your life means many things to many people. Some people will only see what they want to see not taking into account the totality of you. Your ability to adapt and change as needed while showing love and compassion to all makes you an instrument of positive change in the world.

The goal of Pyo is to see areas of our life that are stagnant and in need of change and renovation and consciously manifest positive growth and personal transformation. Over time our ability to initiate transformation constructively can benefit not only our own lives, but also the lives of others.

Visualization Practice

The Turning Wheel

Look at the rings formed from the middle fingers and thumbs. Think of these rings as wheels and then close your eyes. Visualize the wheels of a chariot turning and three horses pulling the chariot. The chariot can be driven through any area where change is needed. Its effects are to transform what is dark and stagnant into places of liveliness. Imagine this chariot running through your body and then jump on the chariot and take it places to create transformation. The three horses pulling this chariot represent your thoughts, your words and your actions.

Application of Pyo

Pyo teaches us that change is inevitable and therefore we should always be ready for the unexpected. Personal transformation is possible as the result of the collective effect of one's personal choices to act.

Here are some examples of times when Pyo meditation would be particularly useful:

-when one feels powerless to change
-when one cannot sense when to begin or end
-when one has difficulty controlling difficult situations
-when one feels apathetic or lacks motivation
-when a situation is declining because of stagnation

Making Sense of Difficulties

When problems arise in life with situations one encounters, one can gain clarity by asking...

Is this showing potential for positive change in anyone's life or is it part of a habitual pattern?

Making a Personal Affirmation

At any moment one can stop and reflect to train the mind to be conscientious by affirming...

I am an instrument of God.
I am the tool of divine transformation.
I am a dynamic source of inspiration to all.
I can transform my life for the better.
It is never too late to make a difference.

Prayers for Others

.

May all beings grow in body, mind and spirit.
May all beings adapt to changing circumstances.
May all beings strive for higher consciousness.
May all beings realize their full potential.
May all beings become renewed.
May all beings develop their creativity.
May all beings see that life is filled with possibilities.
May all beings realize what is positive in their lives.
May all beings not let life just go down the drain.
May all beings be open to whatever comes.
May all beings become better people.

To

Purpose- Harmony with Natural Forces

Om jaitraasi yatra jivaratna swaha
(Hail, the Victorious Sword and Life Giving Jewel)
Jp-On jiterashi itara jibaratanou sowaka

Symbolism-Facing Life Courageously



Gejishi-in Mudra

Harmony

Balance isn't possible without a foundation.
Balance requires that separate elements coexist harmoniously.
Life's balance is upset by extremes.
Nature provides wisdom and self-correcting mechanisms.

The Meaning of To

So far, we have gathered an army. Now that the army is moving, it is time to let it do battle. The character for To means "to fight." From a secular perspective, one might think that this is used to defeat one's enemies, but let's look at this from a different perspective. The enemy could be evil and all that perpetuates negativity, hatred, ignorance and suffering in the world. It could even be all of obstacles that confront you in trying to advance along a more spiritual path. This is essentially what this mudra is designed to do. Internally, energy is gathered, circulated throughout the body and then projected outward so that one becomes a vehicle of positive energy distribution in one's environment. Furthermore, one recognizes this energy when one comes in contact with it and harmonizes with it. Negative energy is routed rather than confronted directly. Flowing with life rather than against it, one begins to seize the opportunities experiences provide.



Guardian Lion Dog

The mudra for To is Gejishi-in or "Outer Lion Seal." The lion is also a symbol within Buddhism that is embedded with much significance. It represents strength, power, and regality. Because the Buddha was born a prince, the lion in certain instances is used to represent any or all of these characteristics. Lions serve as protectors of the Dharma, but beyond that, lions produce a guttural roar, and so they are sometimes depicted symbolically projecting the teachings of Buddha to the entire world.

The Associated Deity

The deity *Jin Nyoi Rin Kannon* or "Wish Fulfilling Goddess" is associated with this mudra. She is a manifestation of the Bodhisattva *Avalokitesvara* or "Goddess of Mercy." She represents the embodiment of compassion. She is typically pictured with six arms representing her outreach and receptivity to humanity. In one of the hands on the left the deity holds a Dharma Wheel and in one of the right hands she holds three jewels symbolic of the Buddha, the Buddha's teachings, and the Buddha's followers. These are the instruments to bring harmony to the world. She is ready to help others with her other arms which are spread out to extend compassion and wisdom to everyone.



Jin Nyu Rin Kannon
(Cintamanicakra Avalokitesvara)

As you meditate upon Kuji 3 imagine yourself as this Wish Fulfilling Bodhisattva. Merge with the source of all giving that comes from the heart as it manifests everywhere in the universe. This giving energy provides and nourishes all living things according to their

needs.

The goal of To is to bring harmony where there is currently discord in life's path. Over time it is possible to develop the ability to see clearly which directions to pursue to live harmoniously with others and how to <u>bring about greater balance</u> in the process.

Visualization Practice

<u>The Outer Lion</u>

Look at the head of the lion formed by your fingers. Close your eyes and visualize sitting on the lions back. Take a deep breath in and then let it out. As you let out the breath slowly the lion begins to run. He runs faster and faster. The lion begins running towards people fighting, people arguing and people with looks of anger on their faces. As they see the lion coming they forget everything and run. Imagine this lion bringing peace everywhere there is conflict and resentment. The lion settles himself on the ground and you get off. Looking around you see that everything is quiet and peaceful.

Application of To

To teaches us that difficulties in life are unavoidable. Hindrances and obstacles will always arise in daily affairs, but how we deal with them makes all the difference. Since we already know that problems will always arise without warning, there is no need to feel disappointment as they happen. Difficulties can provide an opportunity to learn how to manage affairs in an efficient and courageous manner without stressing out about them.

Here are some examples of times when To meditation would be particularly useful:

-when problems arise
-when the course one should take is not clear
-when you or others are not getting along with one another
-when you seem to have lost your way

Making Sense of Difficulties

When problems arise in life with situations one encounters, one can gain clarity by asking...

Is this <u>bringing peace and harmony</u> to anyone or is it a potential source of discord?

Making a Personal Affirmation

At any moment one can stop and reflect to train the mind to be conscientious by affirming...

My life is as precious as a gem.
I bring peace and harmony wherever I go.
I have so much to share with the world.
I vow to be a refuge for all in need.

Prayers for Others

May all beings find peace.
May all beings find balance in their lives.
May all beings find their own rhythm.
May all beings live in harmony.
May all beings live together in peace.
May all beings share the world fairly.
May all beings cooperate with one another.
May all beings seek the Way.
May all beings realize their similarities.
May all beings respect their differences.
May all beings work for the common good.
May all beings learn from each other.
May all beings never feel marginalized.
May all beings pool their resources.
May all beings live righteously.
May all beings move in the right direction.
May all beings do what needs to be done.
May all being work out their problems.
May all beings be as they need to be.
May all beings avoid conflict.

Sha

Character Meaning- A person, someone
Purpose-<u>Healing Self and Others</u>
Om haya vajramantaya swaha
(Hail, Come Swiftly DiamondThunderbolt)
Jp-On haya baishiramantaya sowaka

Symbolism-Personal Protection



Healing

> *Illness naturally arises from disharmony.*
> *Internalize harmony and balance into the core of one's being.*
> *Draw power and vitality from the world around you.*
> *Become an instrument of healing to others.*

The Meaning of Sha

The army that we have commissioned is doing battle and its effect on one part has a ripple effect on every other part. As we attempt to change ourselves the effect is that we change our environment and our connections to the people around us. As one finger of this mudra is placed against another we see how we are interconnected with others.

The mudra for Sha is Naijishi-in or the 'Inner Lion Seal.' The army has been summoned, commissioned and sent into battle. Sha means 'individual person or thing.' The army is a mass grouping and yet it is composed of individual deities that do specific things. From a purely psychological point of view, the army could represent the total focus of one's mental and spiritual resolve or physically as the collective potential of one's 90 trillion cells. The mind itself is a collective network of synapses firing from a whole host of regions of the brain. Each area has its own memories and stored nuances that work according to how one has lived.

The Associated Deity

Fudo Myoo is the deity associated with this seal. Known as *Acala* in Sanskrit, Fudo Myoo was a demon who heard the truth of the Dharma and was converted. He then became one of its fiercest guardians and is also believed to be the wrathful manifestation of Shingon's central figure Dainichi Nyorai. He holds a vajra sword in his right hand and a lasso made of rope in his left hand. The sword is used to cut away all falsehood and ignorance in the world. The rope represents a snare in which people who have heard the Dharma, by realizing its truth, are caught and converted in much the same sense as one might say that the Apostle Peter was a fisherman of men.



Acala (Fudo Myoo)

In the Inner Lion Seal the ring fingers which projected outward in the Outer Lion Seal are now directed inward as they are woven in between the index and middle fingers. Finally, they are looped by the middle fingers. The significance of this is important to understand

why the seal does what is supposed to do. This arrangement allows the power (ring fingers) to be directed inward allowing strength (index fingers) and circulation (middle fingers) to occur and be directed (ring fingers) inwardly. The remaining fingers that are projected up are the index and little fingers. This configuration creates the appearance of a lion facing the subject.

Obviously, as one directs energy into the body that is balanced and harmonious one would expect to find systems in the body responding positively. For this reason, this mudra is associated with personal health, vitality, self-confidence and well being. The healing power of this mudra is capable benefiting the entire individual and this might suggests that one use of the Outer Bond Mudra may be of help in healing others. The mudra is helpful for personal transformation on many levels.

The deity Fudo Myoo (Acala) epitomizes all destructive energies transformed into positive energies. He is a powerful guardian and spiritual protector. As you meditate upon Kuji 4 imagine yourself as Fudo Myoo. Imagine all anger, resentments, and jealous burning away in the fire surrounding you. The sword in your right hand cuts through and destroys all delusions that trap have trapped you throughout your life. As you imagine a lasso in your left hand think of being free from all habits and compulsions that have bound you and kept you from reaching your potential. Let you body be cleansed from all that is toxic to your body, mind and spirit. Your fierce, immoveable demeanor frightens away all negative forces and evil attempting to make you lose your way in this life.

The goal of Sha is to become an instrument of healing and reconciliation. Over time, one turns away from those things that are hindrances to health and well being in favor of what brings sustenance to life.

Visualization Practice

<u>The Inner Lion</u>

Look at the head of the lion facing you with its mouth open. Close your eyes and see the image of the lion in front of you. Take a deep breath in and imagine taking in the lion's breath. The lion's breath illuminates you from inside as you send it to every part of your body. The breath consumes every negative thought and vibration in your body. Imagine the breath destroying all chemicals and harmful substances stored anywhere within you. Keep breathing and taking in more of the lion's breath until you become completely purified and illuminated.

Application of Sha

No one is free from sickness, aging and death. These forms of suffering remind us that our bodies are impermanent and will ultimately fail. This process of decline can be delayed by practicing self-discipline with regards to diet and exercise. Sha teaches us the power of prevention, and how to remedy situations effectively that are within our control. In order to do this one must clearly see what needs to be done and accept circumstances that are beyond our control.

Here are some examples of times when Sha meditation would be particularly useful:

-when you or someone else is ill

-when one is having difficulties accepting something that is difficult to bear
-when you or someone else is suffering
-when you have to come to terms with a difficult matter

Making Sense of Difficulties

When problems arise in life with situations one encounters, one can gain clarity by asking...

Is this making anyone happier or healthier or is it a physical or emotional burden?

Making a Personal Affirmation

At any moment one can stop and reflect to train the mind to be conscientious by affirming...

I am the swift rolling thunder.
I bring the healing power of heaven and earth.

Prayers for Others

May all beings find happiness.
May all beings find joy.
May all beings find inner-peace.
May all beings have a strong life-force.
May all beings be healthy.
May all beings never feel alone.
May all beings find companionship.
May all beings find the correct medicines.
May all beings ask for and accept healing.
May all being forgive others.
May all beings forgive themselves.
May all beings work out their frustrations.
May all beings not blame themselves.
May all beings not blame others.
May all beings accept their faults.
May all beings accept their weaknesses.
May all beings let their problems go.
May all beings work towards improved sanitation world-wide.
May all beings help the impoverished.
May all beings die with dignity.
May all beings never feel abandoned.
May all take a deep breath.
May all beings have clean water.
May all beings put an end to starvation.
May all beings keep a sharp mind.
May all beings dwell on the positive.
May all beings avoid disease.
May all beings avoid toxins.

May all beings avoid pain.
May all beings avoid hunger.
May all beings avoid sickness.
May all beings avoid depression.
May all beings avoid self-doubt.
May all beings avoid mental illness.
May all beings avoid self-criticism.
May all beings avoid stress.
May all beings avoid anger.
May all beings avoid sin.
May all beings avoid attachments.
May all beings avoid ignorance.
May all being avoid lust.
May all beings avoid greed.
May all beings avoid envy.
May all beings avoid jealousy.
May all beings avoid hate.
May all beings all beings avoid condemnation.
May all beings avoid sloth.
May all beings avoid killing.
May all beings avoid self-pity.
May all beings avoid untimely death.
May all beings avoid addiction.
May all beings avoid evil.
May all beings discover those who will help them.

Kai

Purpose-<u>Aweness of Everything</u>
Om namah sanmanta vajranam hum
(Pay homage to the Universal Diamond))
Jp-On namaku sanmanda saradan kan

Symbolism-Bonds that Connect



Gebaku-In Mudra

Awareness

Be open to what life is telling you.
Your life has a purpose which will reveal itself if you allow it.
Yearn to see the connectedness of all things.

The Meaning of Kai

The army that we have commissioned is doing battle and its effect on one part has a ripple effect greatly or to a lesser degree on every other part. As we attempt to change ourselves the effect is that we change our environment and our connections to the people around us. As one finger of this mudra is placed against another we see how we are interconnected with others. One may reflect upon one's attachments to the material world and also how one is inseparable from all other living things.



Shimenawa-A Ceremonial Temple Rope

Gebaku-in as stated before means 'Outer Bond Seal.' If we look at the word for bond we see that its meaning is 'to tie' or to 'arrest.' The deity associated with this seal is Aizen Myoo. It is believed that Aizen Myoo was consumed by his own passions, and lived in a hellish existence of torment as a demon, but was converted to Buddhism and used his passion to spread the Dharma and being one of its guardians. As one uses this mudra one may think of one's connections to others and see how some relationships are bound together. Many are driven by things like lust, envy, and greed. This deity has been used to remove obstacles such as addictions, habits and tendencies that prevent growth and bind us.

Once we can begin to understand and then feel the repercussions of our own actions and the actions of others around us, we can see how situations will play out. It is through an awareness of all that is going on around us that one could develop a superior intuition of events to come.

The Associated Deity

The deity Aizen Myoo like Fudo Myoo represents a wrathful manifestation of the enlightened mind turning worldly passions into a pursuit of wisdom. As you meditate upon Kuji 5 imagine yourself as Aizen Myoo. Imagine the vajra that you hold in your right hand as an instrument of power over ignorance. Imagine your three faces looking around aware of everything. Imagine your third eye open psychically aware of all motivations affecting you. The world of the senses is subjugated by your wrathful demeanor and burns in the flames surrounding you consuming all falsehood and leaving only wisdom and compassion in it is path.



Aizen Myoo

The goal of Kai is to eliminate habits and patterns in life that create a cycle of dependency. By being more aware of everything in our lives we can understand how everything is connected.

Visualization Practice

<u>The Outer Bond</u>

Look at your fingers folded in front of you and think of how they look like a rope. Close your eyes and imagine a large rope in front of you. Now visualize the rope encompassing a group of people. Each person is a personification of different negative qualities you have come across in life and have at times accepted into your life. Imagine one of them is anger, another is pride. Now look for and name the others. You know their names. Let the rope tie them all up. Imagine passing the rope around them and squeezing them in tight together. Let go of the rope and let them drift away from you like a drifting boat. Now look inside your own body and feel where there are places that seem to have knots. Are they in your spine? Maybe your muscles? Or could they be in your memories? Visualize all of these knots untying so that energy and freedom revitalize your entire body.

Application of Kai

Kai teaches us to be mindful of everything while remaining unattached. Our attachments to, namely pleasure and pain, cause us to be selectively blind; accepting or rejecting what

we allow to phase us. Watch your own mind as though it were someone else's, and just let phenomena happen without judging them by your impressions.

> Mindfulness is the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience.
> It isn't more complicated than that.
> It is opening to or receiving the present moment, pleasant or unpleasant, just as it is, without either clinging to it or rejecting it.
>
> -Sylvia Boorstein

Here are some examples of times when Kai meditation would be particularly useful:

-when one becomes obsessive
-when one falls into habitual patterns of behavior
-when one has difficulty maintaining mindfulness
-when one is easily surprised or upset by sudden changes of events

Making Sense of Difficulties

When problems arise in life with situations one encounters, one can gain clarity by asking...

> Is this making anyone <u>more aware of what is necessary for lasting happiness</u> or is this just another superficial attachment?

Making a Personal Affirmation

At any moment one can stop and reflect to train the mind to be conscientious by affirming...

> I am the inferno that devours ignorance.
> I am the divine fire that burns in the heart of man.
> I am the illuminated path of truth.

Prayers for Others

May all beings become more aware.
May all beings become more intuitive.
May all beings take off of their blinders.
May all being expand their consciousness.
May all beings use more of their brains.
May all beings remember their dreams.
May all beings share a common vision.
May all beings not be blinded by their own senses.
May all beings see everything as it really is.
May all beings see everyone as they really are.
May all beings be attentive to one another.
May all beings be interested in helping others.
May all beings become better listeners.
May all beings become better learners.
May all beings be free of bigotry.
May all beings be free of racism.

May all beings be free of political bias.
May all beings be free self-righteousness.
May all beings see how everything is connected.
May all beings see everything existing interdependently.
May all beings remove the chains that bind them.
May all beings end abusive relationships.
May all beings support one another.
May all beings remove attachments.
May all beings live for others.
May all beings live generously.
May all beings perceive danger.
May all beings be prepared.
May all beings be ready for anything.
May all beings prepare for what lies ahead.
May all beings open their eyes.
May all beings expect the unexpected.
May all beings accept what comes.
May all beings choose their destiny.
May all beings realize their fates.

Jin

Om agnaya yanmaya sowaha
(Hail, Formed from Agni/God of Fire)
Jp. On aganaya inmaya sowaka
Purpose-Knowing the Thoughts of Others



Naibaku-in Mudra

The Meaning of Jin

Rope plays a significant role in Buddhist and Shinto beliefs in Japan. The image of the 'endless knot' is a common decorative design. However, from the Buddhist perspective, the image of a knot represents Dependent Origination (all things are bound together). It

reminds us also that one is tied to ones ancestors and even the land on which we live. Heaven and Earth are intimately connected as are other dualistic forces such as cause and effect, and In and Yo (Yin and Yang). Wisdom and Compassion are two interrelated aspirations in Buddhism that this seal exemplifies.

The mudra for Jin is known as Naibaku-in or 'Inner Bond Seal.' As one intertwines the fingers, the index and rings fingers join to make two interlocking rings. The two linked rings symbolize a connection to others particularly in the form of communication. By practicing this mudra one is believed to develop the ability to know what others are going to say or what they are thinking. This however is not the goal. Precognitive abilities are a bi-product of ending the paradigm of 'I' and 'them.' As 'I' becomes 'we,' one shares fully in the joys and suffering of others to the extent that the thoughts of others become easily revealed. Compassion for others is the driving force for this transformation.

The Associated Deity

Sho Kannon is the deity for the Inner Bond Seal. Sho Kannon represents the spiritual source of all other manifestations of Avalokitesvara. Some representations of Kannon show the deity with ten thousand arms which represent her ability to show compassion to everyone everywhere. Each of the arms reaches out to those in need and each carries with it a symbol of the way in which seeks to help others. Sho Kannon is one of many manifestations of Kannon Bodhisattva.

The character for Jin means 'to arrange' or 'lay out' in one context but also 'to state' or 'to explain' in another context. It is for this reason that if we look at the Kuji group forming a sentence, within the affirmation, we state that an army is called upon to do battle and each person is 'laid out.' In other words, each is 'arranged' according to his purpose. Since the individual character can also mean 'to state,' this mudra could also have an association with communication particularly in knowing what someone else is going to say or what they are thinking. Just as Shou Kannon knows each person's needs, one is believed to be able to see what motivates others and from this knowledge be able to act accordingly. This requires a heightened awareness of others and our environment that can only come through becoming a better listener and someone who is responsive to the needs of others. The way in which we relate to others is based on many forms of communication not all of which are verbal.

As you meditate upon Kuji 6 imagine yourself as Shou Kannon. Imagine your eyes, ears and especially your heart open to the needs of all others. Imagine your arms extending out from your body and reaching to help others in need. Each person whose life you touch is filled with love and compassion.

The goal of Jin is to become more intuitive and receptive to the needs of others so that we know instinctively how to relate to people so that they may find joy and happiness. By being more receptive to the needs of others rather than our own needs, we begin to understand clearly in an almost clairvoyant sense what other people really need.

Visualization Practice

<u>The Inner Bond</u>

Look at your fingers interlaced before you. Notice the rings formed by your thumbs and index fingers. Close your eyes and imagine these two rings forming a figure eight or infinity symbol. Imagine a circuit forming in your body. Energy is cycled from one side of the body to the other and back again through the connection formed by the fingers. Now imagine people you know that are close to you. Imagine energy flowing around you and to the people who have started to gather in front of you. The energy begins to form a figure eight pattern as it swirls around you holding you together with these people in a circuit. Extend this connection to include others so that more people become a part of the bond. Begin to send peaceful thoughts out into the circuit and watch it as this pure intent circles and comes back to you.

Application of Jin

Jin teaches us to become more aware of what others are thinking so that we may help them in a way that they will accept. Receptivity to others stems from a genuine to desire to show kindness and compassion. As you meditate upon Jin, imagine taking the problems and sufferings of others away and replacing them with feelings of well-being.

> "The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another."
>
> –Thomas Merton

Here are some examples of times when Jin meditation would be particularly useful:

-when you or others are in a disagreement
-when somebody doesn't care about what others think
-when one cannot express oneself clearly
-when one misunderstands others intentions

Making Sense of Difficulties

When problems arise in life with situations one encounters, one can gain clarity by asking...

Is what you are thinking or about to say helpful or hurtful to others?

Making a Personal Affirmation

At any moment one can stop and reflect to train the mind to be conscientious by affirming...

I am connected to every living thing.
I will choose to open my heart to those around me and communicate wisdom and compassion to everyone.

Prayers for Others

May all beings understand each other.
May all beings break through the illusions.
May all beings know each other's hearts.

May all beings be more perceptive.
May all beings be connected by their sincerity
May all beings say what others needs to hear.
May all beings know instinctively how to help others.
May all beings look after each other.
May all beings offer constructive criticism.
May all beings speak kindly.
May all beings see themselves in others.
May all beings cherish their fellow man.
May all beings develop their humanity.
May all beings feel loved.
May all beings feel valued.
May all beings have dignity.
May all beings cleanse the doors of perception.
May all beings really feel for others.
May all beings really perceive.
May all beings not be alarmed by the unknown.
May all beings share each other's burdens.
May all beings intuitively care for one another.
May all beings be tied together.
May all beings be on the same frequency.
May all beings come together.
May all beings relate to one another.
May all beings speak up for what is fair and just.
May all beings show compassion.
May all beings show empathy.
May all beings be considerate.

Retsu

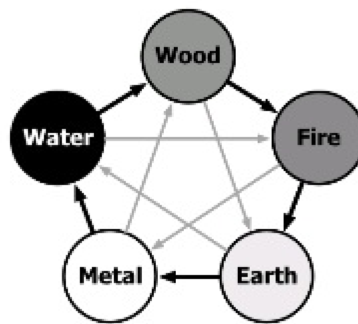
Purpose-Mastery of Time and Space
Om johoti chandoga jivatay swaha
(Hail, Invoke the Chant of Eternal Life)
Jp-On irotahi chanoga jibatai sowaka



Chiken-In Mudra

The Meaning of Retsu

In practice, this mudra is associated with being able to move freely through time and space. If we look at this in a purely practical sense rather than a literal interpretation, we could begin to see that our ability to live in the present is in some cases impeded by our inability to let go of the past. This is turn obstructs our vision for the future. With these illusionary obstacles removed, one could live unhindered by the restrains time and place has put on our consciousness. Some people rob the present by living in the past or planning only for the future out of their own concerns. Essentially, this mudra teaches us to transcend this way of thinking to attain a more profound level of consciousness that is not time and space dependent,



The Five Elements

The mudra for Retsu is known as the Chiken-in or ‘Knowledge Fist Seal.’ It was a gesture believed to have been made by Buddha as a wordless transmission. In this seal the left index finger is held vertically while the fingers of the right hand wrap around it. There are a few different interpretations of its meaning. First, there is an obvious reference to male and female sexuality. Second, with union still in mind, the vertical index finger represents humanity and the fingers surrounding it represent the Buddha or various Buddhas. Third, if we look at the left hand as the world of sentient beings, the right hand becomes a realm beyond worldly existence. Fourth, this fist is sometimes referred to as the Six Element Fist. The five elements are Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Void which also correspond to the Dhyani Buddhas. The sixth element could be represented by the solitary left finger as mind consciousness.

The Associated Deity

The deity for this mudra is *Amida Nyorai*. Amida Nyorai is sometimes referred to as the 'Buddha of Infinite Light and Life' or the 'Buddha of the Afterlife.' He is not the historical Buddha who sat under the Bodhi tree. According to tradition, he was a Bodhisattva named *Hozo* (Dharmakakra) that pledged to set up a Pure Land of ultimate bliss once he attained *Buddhahood, and he is a central figure in Pure Land sects such as* Nichirin Shoshu.



Amida Nyorai

He is a figure associated with eternal life, light and space without the earthly limitations that are marked by a finite conception of time like birth and death. Amida Nyorai epitomizes transcendent wisdom, and limitless love and compassion.

As you meditate upon Kuji 7 imagine yourself as Amida Nyorai. Imagine a serene smile upon your face as you sit with crossed legs with your hands folded at your lap. Imagine rays of light shining in all directions from your body bringing peace everywhere. There is no distinction between past, present and future. There is no divide separating people, places or things. All things melt into one.

The goal of Retsu is no make efficient use of our time and resources that we are given in this life to accomplish our goals. With practice one can learn to maximize one's time with greater effectiveness by eliminating stress and other obstacles that make one less productive.

Visualization Practice

<u>The Five Buddhas</u>

Look down at your right hand holding your left index finger. Close your eyes and imagine yourself standing on top of a mountain looking as far as the eye can see. Visualize Buddhas in all four directions and one that is inside of you. You become filled with wisdom and compassion radiating light in all four directions to the other Buddhas. The light that you send out is magnified and reflected back to you. As the light reaches you it forms a cloud of light encompassing your whole body.

Application of Retsu

Retsu teaches us to realize the value of this very moment in all of its fullness. What is our life if not a timed opportunity? One day we will be dead and unable to take with us the things that we cherish so much now. By prioritizing our time towards activities that bring lasting benefit to ourselves and others we can more fully realize how precious life is.

Here are some examples of times when Retsu meditation would be particularly useful:

-when one never seems to have enough time to get things done
-when one feels overwhelmed
-when one lacks organization
-when one needs to become more resourceful

Making Sense of Difficulties

When problems arise in life with situations one encounters, one can gain clarity by asking...

Is this a <u>wise choice of my time and resources</u> or is this activity wasteful?

Making a Personal Affirmation

At any moment one can stop and reflect to train the mind to be conscientious by affirming.

I am wisdom and bliss.
I will choose to make efficient use of my time and resources because I know that life is impermanent.

Prayers for Others

May all beings treasure each moment.
May all beings know life is precious.
May all beings use their lives wisely.
May all beings make use of their time on Earth.
May all beings realize that they don't live forever.
May all beings live fully in the present.
May all beings be happy for eternity.
May all beings think infinitely.
May all beings understand what life is about.
May all beings find the time for spiritual discipline.
May all beings find the time for prayer.
May all beings organize their time.
May all beings be comfortable with their age.
May all beings make the most of each second.
May all beings avoid living in the past.
May all beings avoid living a life of illusions.
May all beings give each other space.
May all beings share the Earth fairly.
May all beings use nature's gifts wisely.
May all beings care about our planet.
May all beings leave the world a better place.

May all beings be good stewards with the world.
May all beings see that the universe is larger than themselves.
May all beings expand their understanding of time and space.
May all beings know that they are made of atoms like everything else.
May all beings know that the ego is not real.
May all beings expand their vision of the world.
May all beings stop looking at their clocks.
May all beings see their bodies as a temporary home.

Zai

Purpose-<u>Making Use of Natural Elements</u>
Om srija iva rtaya swaha
(Hail, the Wish for Prosperity)
Jp-On chirichi iba rotaya sowaka



Nichirin-In Mudra

The Meaning of Zai

As one forms the mudra the triangular opening forms a portal through which one can project one's wishes or through which they come. Therefore, when using this mudra one might contemplate an open heart so that the gem or Sun can shine upon you. Receptivity to what each mudra offers is as important as one's intent using them.



The mudra for Zai is the Nichirin-in or 'Sun Ring Seal.' The ring refers to the radiant light of the Sun. The thumb of both hands join as do the index fingers of both hands which is reminiscent of the first seal representing strength, but instead of the rest of the fingers being woven together, the seal is opened flat creating a triangle shape by the thumb and

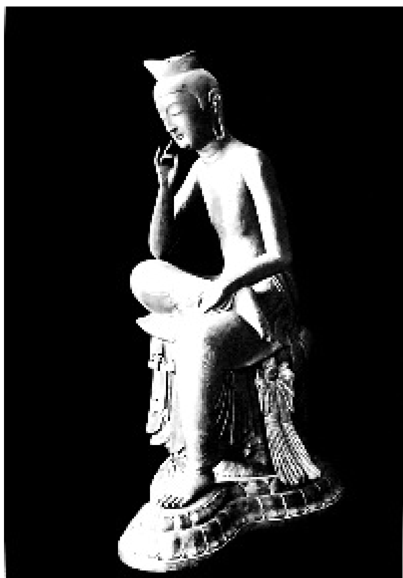
index fingers. The triangular shape also represents a jewel.

The jewel is one of the most basic iconographic symbols within Buddhism representing taking refuge in the Three Gems: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Sometimes the jewel is thought of as a diamond which has the qualities of brilliance and hardness. Brilliance is the illumination of consciousness and hardness symbolizes the indestructible truth of the Dharma.

The word Zai means 'located at' or to 'exist.' Whereas the last mudra projects us freely through time and space, this mudra suggests a state of being. .*Miroku Bosatsu* is sometimes referred to as Maitreya in Sanskrit. As tradition goes, there is a prophecy that a Buddha of the future will be born. Maitreya in this sense is a messianic type figure. He is often pictured sitting and waiting for this prophecy to be fulfilled. The seal therefore has taken on the meaning of manifesting one's wishes for the future from a secular viewpoint. From a more Buddhist and philosophical interpretation, what one wishes for is already within you, and the Three Jewels are part of one's being.

The Associated Deity

The deity Miroku Bosatsu (Maitreya) is sometimes referred to as the 'Buddha of the Future.' He is a figure as yet unborn living in paradise who will one day become a Buddha in a time in which the Dharma will be unknown. Being a messianic figure, he represents all hopes and wishes for the future.



Miroku Bosatsu (Maitreya)

Chinese often venerate Maitreya as what is typically called the "Laughing Buddha." This round and jolly figure is often depicted seated or standing with a cloth bag that is never empty. People often rub his belly for good luck. This represents his ability to bring wealth, abundance and good fortune. This is precisely why Maitreya, at least in his more secular form, appeals to those desiring worldly benefits.

As you meditate upon Kuji 8, imagine that you are Maitreya sitting serenely in paradise listening patiently to the prayers of all and projecting wisdom and compassion in return.

The goal of Zai is to manifest in the present those wishes which best benefit others in attaining real and lasting happiness.

Visualization Practice

The Brilliant Jewel

Look down at your thumb and index fingers forming an open triangle. Close your eyes and imagine a shining jewel in the empty triangular space. The jewel shines brightly and light pours forth to light up your face and then your entire body filling you with peace and contentment. Send your wishes and intentions into this light and let the light then reverse flow and pull your wish or aspiration into the opening from which the light was shining.

Application of Zai

Zai represents the fulfillment of wishes by affirming them as actuality. In such a way this seal represents the magical power of transformation in which the ignorance of worldly existence is turned into pure wisdom. Zai reminds us that unfortunate situations provide us with the opportunity for transformation.

Here are some examples of times Zai meditation would be particularly useful:

-when one has a wish that truly benefits others
-when one wishes for a total reversal of misfortune
-when a complete turn of events is necessary
-when one's outlook of the future is bleak

Making Sense of Difficulties

When problems arise in life with situations one encounters, one can gain clarity by asking...

Is this helping anyone to actualize goals or is it getting someone off track?

Making a Personal Affirmation

At any moment one can stop and reflect to train the mind to be conscientious by affirming...

I manifest dreams into reality.

I will choose to be open to receive all that brings true and lasting happiness in my life and share this with others.

Prayers for Others

May all beings understand their present state.
May all beings have hope for the future.
May all beings have the opportunity to dream.
May all beings have the chance to follow their dreams.
May all beings attain what they think cannot be attained.
May all beings strive for success.
May all beings be blessed.
May all beings shoot for the stars.
May all beings manifest what is best for them.
May all beings have prayers that are heard.

May all beings appreciate what they have.
May all beings be thankful.
May all beings give gratitude.
May all beings answer the prayers for others.
May all beings have their prayers answered.
May all beings manifest happiness.
May all beings pray for the happiness of others.
May all beings be rewarded for their efforts.
May all beings give without having to be asked.
May all beings give without seeking advantage.
May all beings move beyond self-serving needs.
May all beings actualize their goals.
May all beings desire what is best for them.
May all beings ask for what they need.

Zen

Purpose-Enlightened Wisdom
Om a ra pa ca na dhih
Jp-On a ra ba sha nou sowaka

Symbolism-Marishiten Conceals the Sun, Wisdom Hidden Away,Invisibility

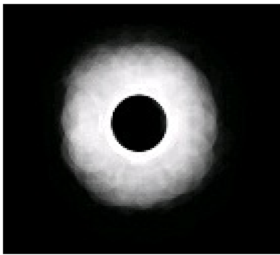


Ongyo-In Mudra

The Meaning of Zen

The mudra for Zen is Ongyo-in which is also known as the 'Invisibility Seal.' To make the seal, the left hand forms a fist and then is concealed in the palm of the right hand. The left hand may represent the Sun itself and the right hand may represent darkness or perhaps even the Moon. This is symbolic of our true nature or self which is obscured by the ego. The Moon dies each month and is reborn, but the Sun shines eternally.

In the Ongyo-In, the right hand conceals the left fist. The seal symbolizes the hidden nature of Esoteric Buddhist teachings leading to enlightenment which has been passed down by personal transmission for almost two thousand years.



Solar Eclipse

The Associated Deity

The deities for the Invisibility Seal are *Monju Bosatsu* and *Marishiten*. Monju Bosatsu, also known as *Manjusri* in Sanskrit, is one of the central Bodhisattvas in Buddhism. He is often pictured holding a flaming sword which cuts through ignorance with truth and wisdom. He sits upon a lotus indicating that he has attained full enlightenment.



Manjusri (Monju Bosatsu)

Marishiten, the Shinto manifestation, is pictured in two basic ways that are dramatically different from each other. As mentioned earlier, sometimes the image of a goddess obscured from view by a blinding light from behind is used to represent the deity. She is light personified into anthropomorphic form and is a consort to Dainichi Nyorai (Vairocana) who is sometimes referred to as the 'Sun Buddha.' Marshiten's name is derived from *Marici* which means 'Ray of Light.'   As Marishiten stands in front of the Sun her form disappears.   The meaning here is that wisdom is obscured by darkness (ignorance).   A person living in darkness is often unable to see what is in the light (truth).

The deity Monju Bosatsu (Manjusri) is the embodiment of knowledge and wisdom. As you meditate on Kuji 9, imagine that you are Manjusri. Imagine yourself holding a sword in your right hand which dispels all ignorance with truth. Imagine a sutra rolled up into a scroll in the other hand and a lotus supporting you from below. The sun shines intensely behind you filling the world with your radiance and wisdom.

The goal of Zen is to attain wisdom eventually leading to enlightenment.   Over time one turns away from trivial activities in life and focuses more on spiritual matters that sustain true and lasting happiness.

Visualization Practice

Zen- The Hidden Treasure

Look down at your right palm covering your left hand that is closed into a fist. Close your eyes and imagine a brilliant sun eclipsed by the moon. Rays of light bend around the moon, and light up your face filling you with joy. You sense the power and magnificence of God within this light, but this is as much as anyone will see of God in this life. It is a great paradox that when God is obscured from us that his enormity and wholeness are complete. When we think we can fully grasp him, he escapes us.

Making Sense of Difficulties

When problems arise in life with situations one encounters, one can gain clarity by asking...

Is this the wise thing to do or is it foolish and self-centered?

Personal Affirmation

At any moment one can stop and reflect to train the mind to be conscientious by affirming..

I will make my life a guiding light of wisdom and compassion to those who live in darkness and seek help.

Prayers for Others

May all beings find profound peace.
May all beings control their own thoughts.
May all beings take responsibility for actions.
May all beings live and pray without hindrance.
May all beings pray for spiritual awakening in the world.
May all beings show genuine kindness to others.
May all beings find suitable spiritual nourishment.
May all beings work through obstructions in their lives.
May all beings find sustenance from inspirational words.
May all beings become enlightened.
May all beings become holy and pure.
May all beings know God.
May all beings become wise.
May all beings follow their vocations.
May all beings respect holy places.
May all beings be tolerant of one another's religions.
May all beings regard this life as an illusion.
May all beings work out their own salvation.
May all beings find spiritual guidance.
May all religions serve the needs of others.
May charity reign over dogma.
May all beings find God in the one's they love.
May all beings see every action as an opportunity for kindness.
May all beings have their prayers heard.

May all beings use words that resonate with the heart.
May all beings live their faith to the fullest.
May all beings rule themselves and not others.

Shinto Deities and the Kuji

Rin

Tensho Kotaijin

Tensho Kotaijin is a Shinto deity that is also known as *Amaterasu Omikami*. The name Amaterasu means 'Heaven's Light' and Omikami means 'Great Divinity.' This feminine deity is worshipped as a Sun Goddess. The earliest stories of her appear in the *Kojiki* (Record of Historical Matters) which explain the origins of the people of Japan. According to Shinto mythology she is among the original gods that came forth from *Izanagi* who created the islands of Japan.

Pyo

Sho Hachiman (Eight Banner War God)

Hachiman means 'Eight Banners' and is the name given to the 15th *Emperor Ojin*. As the story goes, banners fell from heaven giving the figure his name, and so it is believed that Emperor Ojin was deified. There are thousands of Hachiman shrines in Japan commemorating this deity; however, this deity has changed appearance over time. Sho Hachiman is like a patron saint of warriors and archers.

To

Kasuga Daimyojin (The Great Deities of Kasuga)

Kasuga is the site of Shinto shrines and temples associated with the Fujiwara family and their guardian deities. It is unclear whether *Kasuga Daimyojin* refers to a single deity or five of these deities acting as one. At different points in history both may have been the case. Kasuga Daimyojin is a guardian of the land that has been known to appear as necessary manifested in various human guises.

Sha

Kamo Daimyojin

Kamo Daimyojin is a Shinto deity that is the guardian of the *Kamo* clan. It is said this deity manifests itself in the form of a monk.

Kai

Inari Daimyojin

This deity is very commonly represented all over Japan by his messenger the red fox which can be seen quite frequently. *Inari Daimyojin* is a deity for agriculture and specifically rice. One could think of the kami (spirit or deity) as the God of Harvests.

Jin

Sumiyoshi Daimyojin

This deity is a guardian of the seas and is therefore worshipped by fisherman and sailors. *Sumiyoshi Daimyojin* is therefore associated with trade and foreign relations.

Retsu

Nifu Daimyojin

This deity is a guardian for mountain travelers who sought protection from bandits, accidents and malevolent spirits that one may come in contact with.

Zai

Nichi Tenshi (Sun God)

The deity that is associated with this mudra is *Nichi Tenshi* (The Sun God). The Sun is a symbol of higher consciousness and its rays represent the spread of wisdom which dispel darkness

Zen

Marishiten

Marishiten has been depicted quite differently throughout time. At times the deity is represented by one or more warriors with weapons drawn for battle standing on top of a charging boar. Marishiten was commonly venerated by the warrior class for whom this representation resonates. Her role is as a guardian of warriors and protector of nations.

Daily Nitten (Sun Guardian) Veneration

This ritual is a translation from Kuji Goshin Ho by Nagato Soturo. It shows how Buddhist and Shinto deities have been combined in one ritual using mudra and mantra.

Every morning get up in the morning, wash your face and look to the East. Bow three times and join your hands in prayer. (repeat 3 times)

Hail, return to life, hands together at the head I pray… Vairocana Buddha, Nitten Guardian of the Sun, Amaterasu the Great Goddess of the Sun,,,, save all sentient being and illuminate all under Heaven.

Form the Gebaku-In (Outer Bond Seal) and say the formula below to protect you from the Seven Misfortunes

On a bira un ken

Form the Naibaku-In (Inner Bond Seal) and say the formula below to gain the protection of the Seven Lucky Gods.

On a zara datoban

Nittenshi Goshingon (Formula for the Sun God)

Nomaku sanmanda bodanan anichaya sowaka

Marishiten Goshingon (Formula for the Honorable War God)
Nomaku sanmanda dabodanan tan marishi ei sowaka

Gettenshi Goshingon
Nomaku sanmnada bodanan sendaraya sowaka

Fudo Myou Goshingon
Nomaku sanmanda bararatan senda maka roshiyada sowataya mudou da kanman

Bring the hands together in Gassho (prayer).
(Repeat)

Go Gi Mu Ko Ai Min No Ju

May I have protection, be shielded from grief, and receive compassion.

Bow three times to complete the ritual.



Warrior Manifestation of Marishite

Exercise

Goshin Ho Inmyo (Self-Protection Mudra)

Donning the armor of the Three Purifications (Purification of Thought, Word and Deed) and the Three Precepts is known as the Goshin Ho or 'Self-Defense Method' which consists of eighteen secret seals and formulas. If one practices these methods, they have the ability to

purify the body.

Decorate the top of the home altar with plenty of offerings. Lay prostrate bowing to the Buddha and show proper reverence and sincerity. If one performs the teachings of the Buddha using the Three Mysteries (thought, words and deeds) all obstacles will be removed.

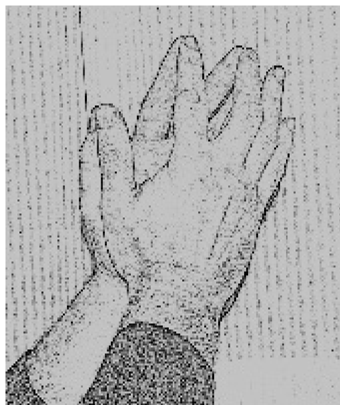
Humbly ask for a strong body, removal of hindrances to spiritual practice and evil influences, protections from fire, water, soldiers, and other calamites. With sincerity you will not encounter any hardships. Be careful of the 'secret teachings' and practice offerings with the utmost respect. These methods are to be done secretly in the home, but you may entrust them to a few believers to do on their own. Enjoy a long life.

Josangyo Inmyo (The Three Purifying Actions Seal)

One's body, speech and actions become purified from various sins using this seal.

Put the hands together as if to pray with Gassho-In but do not allow the fingertips of the last three fingers to touch.

(chant) *On sowabanwa shuda saruwa daruma, sowabanwa shudogan*

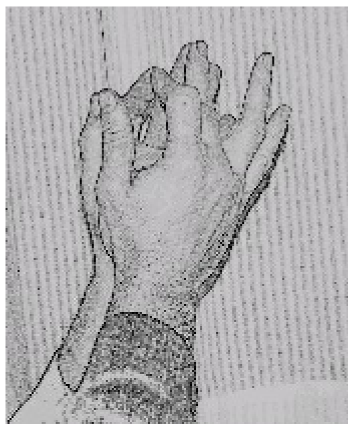


Josangyo-Inmyo

Butsubu Sanmaya (Concentration on the Realm of Buddhas)

All Buddhas of the past, present and future and in all directions protect us from desires, obtain for us a long life and let our prosperity grow.

(chant) On tata giyato tobanwaya sowaka

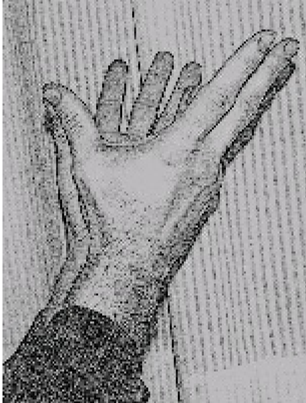


Butsubu Sanmaya

Rengebu Sanmaya (Concentration on the Lotus Realm)

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, may these many incantations obtain good karma and remove any obstacles.

(chant) *On handoma dobanwaya sowaka*

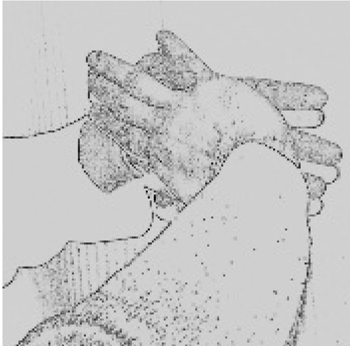


Rengubu Sanmaya

Kongobu Sanmaya (Concentration on the Diamond Realm)

Deities of the Diamond Realm empower us from all the ills of ignorance and despair and help us to become steadfast.

(chant) *On wajira dobanwaya sowaka*

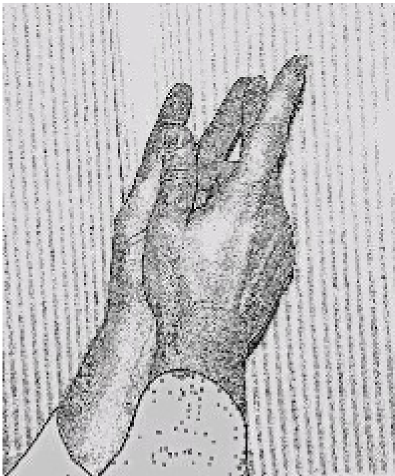


Kangobu Sanmaya

Goshinbu Sanmaya (Concentration on Self-Protection)

Save us with empowerment from the obstacles of demons, and protects us from every evil so that we may become steadfast.

(chant) *On wajira ginihara shihaniya sowaka*



Chapter 10

Meditations

The Purpose of Meditation

It would be an understatement to say that the average person is preoccupied with daily life. Meditation calms the mind and helps a person to gain clarity and focus. Our internal world is filled with thoughts and emotions as we perceive the external world around us as real. Not knowing an alternative, we assume that this world is all there is. We may feel trapped in it and spend our whole lives reacting to it. Meditation can put this world into perspective, help us to live in contentment and feel happier in general.

The Historical Buddha achieved enlightenment while sitting under the Bodhi tree. By his example, Buddhists calm the mind to achieve a state of intense concentration known as samadhi. In this state, a realization of the inherent emptiness (sunyata) of all things takes place. Emptiness in this context means that all phenomena lack any true essence and neither exist nor not exist. This of course is the ultimate goal of meditation.

People do not really take kindly to the idea that everything, the self, is inherently empty. We put stock in the existence of ourselves and the things that we possess as having value. This value perhaps gives us something to hold on to, and without it we feel as though we may slide into an abyss. Emptiness however, is not an abyss in which everything, including ourselves, becomes devoid of meaning, flavor and enjoyment. It simply means that we realize everything as it is in its real context.

Within Buddhism there is always however a relative and absolute meaning. For the average person who cannot find much time during the day to meditate for even twenty minutes, sitting in meditation like the Buddha until enlightenment occurs is not practical. Therefore, each person depending on their capacity can benefit from the concentration needed to focus the mind. In relative terms, this means taking small steps in the right direction. The first step is getting started.

Meditation is a way to find peace of mind and develop virtue in one's life by reflecting on what we have done and resolving to be better people. In order for the experience to be deeper and more beneficial, there are a few things to keep in mind. Meditation requires sincerity of purpose and if one is not familiar with meditating at least it is possible to be sincere in an effort to try it out and see if it does anything for you. Some people may find it relaxing and do it for that purpose only. Others may want to deepen their own ability to quiet their mind. Still others may see this as a time to reflect on some subject of contemplation. This could be a feeling such as love, charity, or compassion for example. It could also be a figure of worship, veneration or admiration. It may be an object of incredible beauty and perfection that because of its qualities, you take the time out of your busy day to spend time with it.

Preparation

Through the process of preparing a meal or getting reading to go to bed, we follow certain steps routinely so we get in the right mode to eat or sleep. We don't just eat the moment

we feel hungry nor do we just nod off regardless of what we are doing. As abundant and convenient as food has become, we still at least have to open some cupboards, take out a bowl and spoon. As tired as we are, we still have to wash up and change for bed. Likewise, we don't just stop our every day busy mind on a dime and start meditating. We need to prime it a little first. We can do this by following a few basic steps:

1. Find a place free of clutter and distractions.
2. Let go of any emotions from any recent drama that occurred during the day.
3. Reflect remorsefully on any suffering you've caused others and then let it go.
4. Pray that you can do better in the future.

Perhaps the reason for these steps deserves some explanation. Using the cooking metaphor from earlier; sometimes it is necessary to do the dishes before trying to prepare a new meal. Most people look at their cooking utensils to make sure they are clean before using them. In a similar way, we should clear our mind and hearts of all negativity before meditation. Our sins represent negative karma that can hinder positive change in our lives.

Mindfulness and Clarity

To calm the everyday mind and find clarity, it is helpful to watch how your mind reacts to situations as though you were observing someone else. We have all had experiences in which after doing something have said to ourselves, "I can't believe I just did that. What was I thinking?" At such moments we watch ourselves reflecting on our mistakes, but at the moment we got ourselves into trouble we were unaware of our own mind.

Hopefully, we learned a little of this in school as children or at home with our parents. In school, we were given rules to follow such as 'Raise Your Hand If You Have Something to Say in Class." When we blurted things out our teachers may have reprimanded us and reminding us that if everybody blurted out answers, only those people would have the chance to be heard, and people who waited patiently would be overlooked. Controlling ourselves now as it was then is a way to be considerate of others even if it means putting our desires second. As we get older, the courtesy of dealing with other people in a fair and equitable way is often lost in the fixation of "me." We become very aware of how people treat us unfairly and size up other people's minds and intentions quite easily. It is looking at our own mind that causes us the most problems.

Watching our own mind is not unique to Buddhism or any other religion for that matter. Christians who take examining their own conscience seriously are not just doing so by repentant prayer or by confession. It is a process that happens throughout the day while events unfold. In this way, one becomes completely mindful of one's actions in each moment. Ask yourself these questions throughout the day as though you were asking someone else.

Seated Meditation

The purpose of seated meditation is to calm the mind to bring oneself to a state of peace. How to do this varies according to the tradition one follows. Although the historical Buddha

achieved enlightenment through meditation, the emphasis on the type of meditation and the necessity of its practice is different among different sects. Zen Buddhists for example emphasize seated meditation as the Buddha had done in their expression of Buddhism much more so than other sects such as Shingon.

Since the purpose of meditation is to calm the endless static of the mind, it is a practice which can be utilized by all people regardless of whether one has any religious interest or affiliation. Although prayer can be a form of meditation, not all ways in which people pray are meditation. There are certain basic elements that are generally recognized by traditions that share meditation to be essential. First, meditation is generally done sitting rather than lying down so that the person will not fall asleep as they become more relaxed. Secondly, the person though relaxed should be completely alert and not lethargic while sitting. Thirdly, sitting requires some basic structural support and so the spine is kept in a straight alignment to encourage proper circulation and alertness. Lastly, one should take deep, full breaths which expand the abdomen during inhalation.

In Hindu and Chinese Buddhist traditions one sits with the legs crossed. Sitting this way becomes uncomfortable very quickly and so a cushion is placed under the seat to keep the correct alignment of the back. In Japan, meditation is done sitting in *seiza*. In this way, one bends down to both knees and then sits on the heels. For those who have joint pain a special stool is used which takes the pressure off of the ankles and feet. In any case, the correct alignment of the spine will help to maintain a posture suitable for meditating for longer periods of time with less discomfort and distraction.

Although there are some types of meditation done with the eyes open, most styles keep the eyes closed. The hands are positioned in various ways depending upon what is symbolically represented by the gesture. For a beginning practice, perhaps just fold the hands on top of the other on the lap. Below are some simple meditation exercises that one might start with if one has never meditated before:

Relaxation

Sit comfortably with the eyes closed as previously described in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Begin by taking a deep breath and allow the abdomen to expand as you inhale. Exhale the air out of your nose and imagine all tension and anxieties from your day being expelled with your breath. Continue to breathe in this way for at least 10 minutes. If thoughts come to your mind, make no conscious effort to ignore them or pursue them. Simply focus on your breathing and let the process relax you. This meditation will lower your heart rate and blood pressure while you are meditating. With frequent practice soon you will be able to set your body at ease by reproducing this type of breathing at any time. Each deep breath will bring more oxygen into your lungs and thereby bring more oxygen to your body's tissues at the cellular level.

Types of Meditation

There are two basic types of meditation: Analytical Meditation and Placement Meditation. We could think of Analytical Meditation as a cognitive process of actively questioning how what we call "our mind" is responding to our environment. We can

develop the habit of watching our own mind as one would watch an animal in a zoo. We can observe ourselves reacting to phenomenon that causes us to feel emotions as though that mind was someone else's. When something causes us to feel upset or sad, we ask ourselves-why? It is not uncommon for people to say things like "You make me so upset!" Yet, this statement is a declaration that the person has surrendered control of their own emotion to someone else. By reacting this way, we let our external world determine our inner world. By observing these situations in an analytical way, we can step back and see ourselves objectively.

Observing the nature of our own mind is just one way to approach Analytical Meditation. We could also contemplate our own life and death. Each of us has been given in this life a chance. We are all going to die at some point, and everybody and everything that we hold dear will not accompany us. So, we can consider what is really most important in this life. Hopefully, we will be able to see that the superficial things that fill our time and distract us are really only hiding a sense of vacancy. Things like relationships that are more meaningful may be neglected in favor of acquiring material things that only make us feel better for a while.

If long after our death we are remembered at all, it will be for our contributions to others and not for what we have done for our own selfish reasons. It is through analytical meditations such as the ones that I have mentioned that we can turn our attention away from ourselves and on to others. We can then begin to look at our lives and see how one can begin to practice loving kindness (bodhicitta). The Six Perfections start with Generosity, and this virtue is a practical expression of loving kindness.

Placement Meditation refers to meditation practiced usually while sitting as the Historical Buddha sat. Zen Buddhists do this type of meditation by just sitting which is very difficult. Thoughts pop into one's head and my just sitting one cannot think to get rid of thoughts. It requires that one become mentally still and this becomes its own type of concentrated focus. Esoteric Buddhists however do not attempt to empty the mind. Instead, there is typically something on which the mind focuses. The following are some objects of one's focus:

1. One's breaths
2. Mandalas
3. Mantras
4. Deities
5. Objects (especially those associated with deities)
6. Seed Syllables (symbolic of deities)

Meditation Exercises

Breath Meditation

Without something to focus on, the mind tends to wander as thoughts enter into the mind. Therefore, beginners to meditation might find that focusing on taking deep slow breathes

will help in building their concentration. Try to find a quiet place with dim lighting that is comfortable and peaceful for you. Sit on the ground with the legs crossed. Use a cushion under your bottom if necessary, but remember to keep the back straight. Hold the head up straight and place the tongue lightly on the roof of the mouth. As you breathe in, allow the abdomen to expand fully. As you breathe out, allow the abdomen to constrict naturally. Breathe through your nose quietly. Keep your eyes either closed or just look forward with the eyes unfocused as though half-asleep. Take long deep breathes and focus fully on each breath.

This meditation helps a person to relax and become more aware of their own body and mind. If a person has difficulty settling down for other types of meditation, one could always start with this before proceeding on to other types of Analytic or Placement Meditation.

Mandala Meditation

A mandala is a geometric figure which represents the universe. The imagery within is highly symbolic and causes one to be reminded of Buddhist teachings through the depictions found within the mandala. The patterns in many mandalas focus one's mind constantly into the center of the picture helping one to develop focused concentration. In Shingon and Tendai Buddhism, the Taizokai and Daikongokai mandalas are often used. These mandalas have Dainichi Nyorai at the center and are organized in such a way that other Buddhas are arranged into assemblies outward from the center. These mandalas require much study and therefore are not really recommended for someone just beginning meditation.

It should be noted that mandalas can also be three dimensional in the form of stupas. Stupas are pagoda like structures that symbolically represent such things as the different realms of existence or the five elements. If you are working with a mandala for the first time, find a reproduction of the mandala that you can hang on a wall a few feet across from you while you sit in meditation. Look forward into the center of the mandala and focus your attention. If your mind begins to drift, refocus and go back into the center of the mandala. Implement the mantra and mudra you have learned to help your focus.

Mantra Meditation

A mantra is typically a short set of syllables from selected Sanskrit words. As mantras were adopted in other parts of Asia, they were pronounced phonetically in languages such as Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese in a way that attempted to preserve the original pronunciation as closely as possible. If you are practicing mantra for the first time, perhaps learn to say the mantra from memory first before attempting to say it while you meditate. In this way, you will not be distracted by trying to get the words just right.

One nice thing about mantras that many people don't know is that mantras do not have to be spoken out loud. In fact, one can say them only loud enough for the practitioner's own ears. They may also be said only in the mind which in some ways is highest form of mantra. If the mantra repeats over and over as a rhythm in one's own mind, then one's idle thoughts are replaced by something of higher substance.

Mantras may or may not have any understandable meaning even in Sanskrit. That is because they are words with representational meanings. Being short in structure, they do not rely on grammatical rules as would complete sentences. Many mantras in Sanskrit begin with Om and end with Swaha. Much could be said about Om, but for now think of this sound as encompassing the vibration of the whole universe and setting the feeling for the rest of the mantra. The ending swaha could be translated as something akin to an invocation or saying 'let it be done.'

Mantras can also be written down instead of spoken. For instance, the mantra Om Mani Padme Hum is perhaps one of the most common mantras in Tibet that is chanted but also written on prayer wheels that turn. The mantra could be translated as 'Hail to the Jewel Lotus.' This refers to wisdom and compassion which encapsulates the meaning of Buddhism in general. Mantras represent a shorten form of much longer sutras, and therefore by either repeating the mantra, reading it or writing it, one in a sense propagates the essence of the sutras themselves. By turning the prayer wheels the mantra is repeated over and over and so this comes from this idea. Mantras are also written on stones and other objects such as printed prayer flags.

Deity Meditation

Deities as they are represented within Buddhism are in some cases real people who have been disciples of the Historical Buddha or played some important role in the development of Buddhism. Perhaps deity is not the best choice of words to describe them. They are not gods and in fact, gods do not really exist within Buddhism. Some figures are bodhisattvas, demonic-like figures, or even imaginary characters that have no actual existence in any realm other than myth or one's imagination. This is often troubling to Westerners who like to keep their mythology separate from their factual history. In relative terms, these deities or figures are treated as though they are real and images of them are deserving of the same respect. In absolute terms, it is understood that none of these figures have any real existence any more than anything else in the world. In this sense, all forms are illusions and are inherently empty of actual existence. With that in mind, consider that these figures represent certain virtues or positive aspects of one's own psyche.

There are various ways to meditate on these figures depending on the Buddhist tradition one follows. Regardless, each tradition shares some commonalities. The common denominator seems to be that one must be able to visualize the deity within one's self in such a way that one does not recognize any duality. This can be done by visualizing the figure across from you while in meditation. The figure is visualized repeatedly until the figure can be vividly recreated and then animated. Such focus is extremely hard to develop. Besides just the physical appearance of the deities, one also visualizes the character and feeling of the figures. Through thoughts (concentration), words (mantra) and actions (mudra), the Three Mysteries (Sanmitsu) transform this meditation into an empowerment in which one's own consciousness dissolves into the divine, life-giving force of the universe (Dharmakaya).

Ritual Object and Seed Syllable Meditation

Some forms of deity meditation involve visualizing a ritual object held by the deity. For

instance while meditating on Fudo Myoo, one may visualize his double edged sword and its symbolic significance of cutting through ignorance. In addition, one may instead visualize seed syllables that correspond to each deity. For instance Ham (Siddam) or Kan (Japanese) is used to represent the wrathful deity Fudo Myoo. A basic practice for visualizing the seed syllables would follow these basic steps:

The practitioner sits quietly in meditation with the eyes closed.

He begins to visualize a round lunar disc which represents a still unblemished mind.

At the base of the disc is a white eight petal lotus representing wisdom.

In the center of the disc is the seed syllable in an ancient Sanskrit script known as Siddham script.



A-Syllable with Moon Disc and Lotus

This form of visualization in Shingon is used for a variety of Siddham characters. One of the most common is the letter A. It is believed that this letter is the mother of all sounds and that the Siddham script and their pronunciations are a sacred language which puts one in contact with divine consciousness. The Siddham language was used extensively during Kukai’s time to transmit the correct pronunciation of sutras and the mantras they contained within. Kukai did not attempt to phonetically transcribe the words using Chinese characters with a similar pronunciation. In this way he attempted to capture the sounds from the ancient language as closely as possible to maintain the integrity of the material.

Chapter 11

Attributes of the Kuji

Rin-Steadfastness

toughness, endurance, solidity, fortitude, firmness, backbone

After looking at these words perhaps one can begin to think of strength as being an attribute that goes beyond just physical strength. Developing the physical body to be strong no doubt has its place, and will help sustain one's strength into old age; however there is another dimension to strength that is developed from the inside out. Strength for its own sake is just another form of vanity and an illusion of the body that could mask underlying feelings of weakness and powerlessness.

Endurance comes from bearing what is uncomfortable and carrying on. Through self-denial we develop the will-power to turn away from frivolous attachments. This power of the will perhaps is not just a choice as any other but instead a consensus of one's whole being. The term 'intestinal fortitude' is sometimes used to describe inner strength, and we sometimes use the term 'to stand firm' on an issue of principle. In a world of moral relativism it is important to take account of our humanity and be guided by what brings wisdom and compassion to others around us. Because of reason if not faith, find the need and means to treat others with honor and dignity. By strengthening others in this way everyone benefits. It is easy to just go with the flow and do what society thinks is all right.

The Eightfold Path begins with having the right mind and attitude. The first Kuji challenges us to develop strength and courage to face challenges in life and overcome them through correctness of purpose. This forms the foundation of all that is to come.

Pyo-Activity

energy, power, movement, motion, action, liveliness, dissemination, stirring

Power is created when strength is put into motion. Personal power might be used to describe the purpose of this Kuji seal, but that term falls short of what it really means or how it could really be used. Rather than thinking of ways to develop one's own power, instead look at ways first in which your power is taken from you on a daily basis. Power is drained from people all the time by other people and activities in their daily life. It is even drained searching for things they don't really want and never intend to find.

Life is constantly stirring, but for what? The stock market? Social networking sites? Daily news cycles? The purpose of this particular meditation is not to discover a new object of pursuit until it loses its novelty, but rather to find stillness away from the endless chatter and begin to actively promote activities that are beneficial. The Wheel of Life illustrates how negative factors in life perpetuate suffering. The Dharmachakra or 'Wheel of the Law' runs counter to the life of suffering and offers an alternative path to liberation and awakening. The Eightfold Path which is represented by the spokes of this wheel, is the roadmap to 'turn' one's life around.

I get the sense from observing most people that they are overwhelmed with their lives and that energy is not flowing in and around them normally. If you could imagine circuits of

energy flowing through people and around their bodies, such people would appear grossly imbalanced. In some places like the brain and chest area, there is stress overload and in other places there is poor circulation. Imbalances within the endocrine system plays an important role in this as the body becomes addicted to the stimulation provided by the release of hormones, endorphins and other neurotransmitters. Activities that provide such stimulation perpetuate habitual behaviors and tendencies that fundamentally imbalance the person even at the cellular level.

To-Harmony

compatibility, cooperation, rapport, synergism, symbiosis, union

We can't change natural laws so we've got to work with them, right? So, we can start by looking at how causality functions in our lives. What decisions have we made that put us into some of the situations we are currently in now? We could do the same for any system. Think of politics, education or family dynamics also. Some decisions bring successes and others bring failures. By looking at how cause and effect have played major roles in our successes and our failures we can learn from our past. Ideally, we want to work WITH factors that promote well-being and not against them. By being rigid and inflexible one gets broken or bent in the process. By learning to when to yield and when hold firm, one can begin to learn to adapt as necessary in life to changing circumstances. This is precisely how many troubles are avoided and how many opportunities are spotted. Many people stand in their own way of what they really need in life. Recognize that the principle presented for this Kuji seal could be interpreted as 'riding the flow of the Way.' That's really it if I had to come out and just say it. How one can do that is the real question, isn't it? It takes honesty to look at oneself and one's relationships to others. Insecurities of all sorts cloud people's thinking and create impediments that obscure the truth.

Living the Way is a life that could be characterized as following 'inspiration' rather than 'desire.' Life then becomes one's own work of art. There are some who live life depending upon others for security while others find security only from their own efforts. Security however is an illusion. It is a desire that cannot actually be fulfilled. Life's circumstances can take a turn for the worse without any notice at any time, and so life by it very nature is uncertain and therefore insecure. By placing one's trust in people, institutions, and ideologies, a false sense of security is produced. All of these things are subject to change. Living by inspiration should not be interpreted as waiting around for inspiration to come. Inspiration is always there because it is ever present. It is not simply a creative thought or whim but rather a life giving force of consciousness within the universe.

Energy and momentum that you begin to activate in your life need to take a course that nourishes and sustains you. Feeding past addictions with increased fervor will only cause setbacks. Set your eyes far ahead to see how decisions and choices you make now will influence your future. Are these decisions for your overall best interest? Relationships where there is not a give-and-take lack the cooperation and compatibility that you need to move ahead in life. Surround yourself with people who share a common vision and will help you move closer to what is best for you in life. Be an instrument of positive change in your

own life and in the lives of others. Beware though that everyone is not open to change. There is security in keeping the status quo. Go ahead-ride the lion. It'll take you places you never thought you would go.

Sha-Healing

rebuild, sooth, rehabilitate, alleviate, rejuvenate, restore, revive

It's now possible to focus some of that energy and harmony inward and make adjustments that will bring you health and well-being. If the previous stages have helped to create positive change in your life, you might be experiencing some changes on the inside as well. As you change your thinking, feelings change. As feeling change, chemistry changes and this in turn causes changes even at the cellular level. A person can change any of these factors and manifest change in their life. Looking beyond the physical body, one may begin to experience new dynamics at work within relationships. It all begins to change inside and out. As one begins to live in harmony with one's surroundings, it becomes apparent how many aspects of society are completely off-kilter. If you offer peace and reconciliation to everyone around you, it will have a healing effect not only on you but obviously on everyone else around you.

Health is not just a physical phenomenon as we would like to think here in the west. Our minds are more than just a brain. The brain after all controls and coordinates all the organs and organ systems in the body either directly or indirectly. Your mind and how you think about yourself and your life plays a crucial role in determining your own health and well-being. Emotional wounds can manifest themselves as physical conditions. In some cases, we knowingly choose what is not ultimately good for us. It is essential to forgive all past emotional debts payable to you. Become a healer of oneself first and then extend this healing to others.

There are some physical conditions and limitations that we just have to accept about ourselves because we cannot erase the past. How we deal with them however can be changed. Here are some suggestions to consider when working on your health.

1. Relax and take time for activities that help you eliminate or lower stress in your life.
2. Get moving. Walking for at least 20 minutes a day a few times a week could help improve your cardiovascular system and maintain a better weight.
3. Eat nutritious, well-balanced meals and avoid overeating.
4. Stay hydrated by getting enough purified water daily.
5. Get enough rest. Chances are you don't get enough sleep.
6. Find time to do leisure activities that you enjoy especially those that make you laugh.
7. Work on relationships to develop mutual respect and understanding.
8. Maintain a positive and optimistic outlook on life.
9. Pursue passionately what you love in life.

10. Don't forget to smile and laugh!

Kai-Awareness

feeling, intuition, premonition, attentiveness, perception, mindfulness

Out of all the information that is in the field of your vision, your eyes are capturing only a small fraction. Of all the information that your eyes send to your brain, your brain is only processing a small fraction. After information is sent to your brain it is then relayed to many areas of the cerebrum for finer processing. Some of these areas will bias your account of what you have seen by linking these images to emotions and memories that have come to form your perspective.

By understanding how there are consequences for our actions due to cause and effect, in many cases we can predict the outcome of many situations before they unfold. As one becomes more observant of this natural process, it then becomes possible to realize the certain activities should be avoided all together as preventative measures to avoid problems in the future. This is a way to protect oneself from gathering bad *karma* (actions). Because others make decisions that affect us, we cannot always avoid being involved in situations that go bad that have been beyond our control. However, if we develop a heightened awareness of what is going on around us, we may get a sense of what to look out for. By being aware of how our actions affect others we can prevent them from suffering as a result of our own motivations or carelessness. This requires that one first of all cares about others and considers them respectfully.

Awareness is something that must be felt as well as thought. Since thoughts can be deceiving, try to feel what is happening around you and allow something inside of you to observe this process objectively. Inanimate objects follow natural laws. Living things follow basic drives and motivations. By objectively accessing these motivations one can broaden awareness. It might be helpful to imagine your heart opening up to the world and taking in what is going on all around you. This is not after all so much a process of just being 'mentally' aware. Awareness can come from the five senses and also the sixth sense-'consciousness.'

Jin-Communication

Intuition, attentiveness, receptivity, empathy, projection

The theme of Jin has sometimes been interpreted as 'knowing the thoughts of others' or being able to read people's minds. Clairvoyance or even deep insight into the psyche of others is not uncommon for those who learn to tame their own mind through spiritual meditation. It happens as a bi-product of a deeper understanding of one's own mind and an awareness of everything and everybody around us. All living things normally desire to be happy and avoid pain and suffering. Therefore, happiness and pain you could say are two great motivations for behavior in people as well as all other living things. As we get to know people better, their preferences inform us of what pleases them. These preferences result in choices which in turn result in predictable patterns of behavior.

Being human, our whole life is filled with making decisions based on what we sense rather that what we can actually know as facts. Clairvoyance and telepathy are hard for most

people to accept because they are abilities that are far beyond the capabilities of what most people consider possible. They also immediately bring to mind fakes and frauds that have been exposed in the media. However, it is not unusual for people to occasionally have a strong 'vibe' about a place or person without necessarily having any objective reason. We often have a 'gut feeling' or intuition that guides our actions and yet we don't consider ourselves psychics and we don't label the experiences remarkable. Perhaps this is because we don't rely upon them and we find them so inconsequential in the scheme of our daily lives that they are anomalous. What if we relied upon these phenomena more? Could they happen more often if we paid more attention to them or are they just coincidences in which we invest meaning? Each of us has experienced moments in which someone walks into a room and without a word we know that something is wrong. Being receptive to the thoughts and feeling of others to a greater extent can allow one to gain a stronger sense of intuition. Obviously if a person is standing in front of you, there are verbal cues, body language and eye movements that can give deeper insight into what a person is thinking.

By practicing Kuji-In one may develop a keen sense of what others around you are thinking or feeling, but this is not their purpose. Such abilities are the bi-products of this practice and not the goal. As a person sets his sights on higher consciousness the desire to satisfy an ego that would seek advantages over others through the Kuji-In withers away and is replaced by the desire help others. It is unnecessary to be a believer or a skeptic with regards to any aspect of the Kuji. Your thoughts and words can reinforce a mindset that determines your life circumstances in real time. Therefore, in a sense what you say to yourself is either going to maintain a status quo or help to reinvent you. This is not only true for yourself but it is also true for everyone you come in contact with. Speak genuinely and inspire others to great things. Let others speak to you in deeper ways and listen by reading between the lines.

Retsu-Efficiency

timeliness, perspective, punctuality, orientation, broad-mindedness

Retsu embodies the notion that one is surrounded and embraced by the Five Tathagatas (Beings of Higher Consciousness) who in essence transcend time and space with pure wisdom and compassion. The images of these beings is brought to us and in turn we are brought to them transcending time and space. As a result, Retsu encourages us to ask how we limit ourselves and move beyond the confines of an ego based reality to something much broader. Do we make excuses thinking that we are all alone in this world? Do we think that we are too busy, too incapable or too broke to change our lives? Our limitations are largely self-imposed and are reinforced by our thinking and our attitudes. Our thoughts are largely not our own, but only the bits that seem to run congruently with the perspective that we have gained over time.

Retsu also embodies the concept of living harmoniously with the Six Elements within nature. Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Void are commonly known as the Godai or 'Five Elements.' Each represents different material and metaphysical qualities. The sixth element is 'consciousness' which is represented by the solitary vertical finger in the Chiken-In

mudra. The five colors and the five senses could also be represented within the mudra as well. The Five Tathagatas play an essential role within Esoteric Buddhism and especially Shingon.

Many people express that they don't have the time to set aside for meditation or prayer; however, time is prioritized based on what people value the most. People typically spend a lot of time grazing among media sources throughout the day as if there were some immediate need to be linked to what is happening with others at every moment. Meanwhile there is an inner vacancy that remains unfulfilled. By removing what is not essential from one's environment, one frees up space. By eliminating habitual activities that are not productive or beneficial, time is set free. This alone is an impetus for great transformation in a person's life. This process is not easy. People are genuinely attached to the things that bind them.

Retsu has often been associated with 'mastery of time and space' or 'mastery over the elements of nature.' It is a little bit foolish to desire the power to control time and space without having much control over your own time and space. The first step in changing our world to a better place starts with changing ourselves. By removing things we don't need from the past we are letting go of the past. Though this is symbolic, it is more than just a mental affirmation. It is realized fully by one's actions.

The Dalai Lama when asked what surprised him the most about humanity answered,

> *"Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices his money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not enjoy the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived."*

Zai-Manifestation

to elucidate, to manifest, to clarify, to bring forth, to actualize

There are two distinct associations related to Zai. The Buddhist interpretation is related to setting one's sight on the brilliant light of higher consciousness represented by the Sun or the image of a jewel. The secular interpretation has been to view Zai as a means of manifesting one's wishes. The two seem unrelated, but in actuality they are not only connected, they are at least somewhat interdependent.

Higher consciousness is limitless. One could think of it as an aspect of God or Source manifested in terms we can all tap into. Some may tap into it by prayer or meditation while others may stand at places like the Grand Canyon or Niagra Falls and be moved by something much more powerful than themselves taking the person at least for a time outside of their normal consciousness. Whether God exists is a source of endless debate for skeptics and believers, but God or the 'idea of God' serves a very important purpose in our minds. It takes our attention away from ourselves and the here and now of everyday life. In that sense, the existence of God or Source, allows the possibility of transcending our egos, and realizing that happiness can be found outside of the materialistic world in which we live.

My seven year old daughter frequently draws very detailed pictures of things that she creates from her imagination. One day she invented a 'duck-dog.' There it was...a dog with a duck's bill. She had taken an idea and created in physical form an object of her own imagination for her own entertainment. To the child, the distinction between the possible and impossible is not yet so jaded by the intellect. In the child's mind an experience that is imagined activates many of the same neurons as an experience actually lived, and so over time the distinction between the two may fade.

Essential to being able to manifest what is needed in one's life setting attainable goals for oneself. After making such goals, it is then important to work towards attaining them in a practical way and realistic fashion. It takes wisdom to know what one 'needs' versus what one 'wants." For the Buddhist, the Three Jewels are the Buddha, the Dharma (Buddha's teachings) and the Sangha (Buddhist community). It is in these jewels that one takes refuge and not the world. Through the jewels of wisdom and compassion, the true treasures, are manifested.

Zen-Personal Awakening

enlightenment, wisdom, peace, self-discovery, self-actualization

The image of the Sun obscured by the Moon has been discussed earlier in this book in association with Zen. As a result this Kuji-In has often been associated with invisibility. However, it is also associated with enlightenment. So, one must wonder what is the connection.

The Pop-Artist Andy Warhol was known to have amassed quite a large collection of items over his lifetime. After his death great pieces of art by such notable artists as Picasso were found scattered among other possessions of little or no value at his New York home. Warhol's art combined aesthetic sensibilities with mundane objects like soap boxes and soup cans to produce something that was at the same time both sublime and trivial. I believe that the Pop-Art movement foreshadowed the 'The Age of Information' which we are currently in. Never before has so much information been available through our fingertips simply by going onto the internet. Like Warhol's possessions, one must sift through information to find the precious amongst the mundane.

When something is not seen by others it becomes invisible. It does not mean that something has to disappear. In fact quite the opposite is usually true. Something that is invisible can be present and yet remain unseen. This happens as a result of not knowing what to look for and not having adequate discernment. In a way, we are selectively blind to the aspects of the world around us. With more information bombarding our senses, we become less able than ever before to focus our attention on any one thing for any length of time. This has created a situation in which all information that comes to us becomes relative to everything else. The words of an accomplished master are skimmed over just as quickly the words of an occasional blogger. Knowledge that has taken lifetimes to accumulate can be served up effortlessly on the web.

From the Buddhist perspective, higher consciousness will always be obscured by this world, just as the Moon or clouds can obscure the Sun. Our true selves are not hidden

from us. They are simply lost among everything else that we cannot sort out.

Exercise

Applying the Kuji to Your Own Life

This book has offered several ways to look at the Kuji-In and hopefully you have found some methods that work for you. The Kuji-In have meant many things to many different people and they have always been transformed and renewed in the process. Some people might feel a little odd repeating something in a language they don't understand that supposed to do something for them. That's understandable. Since this self-protection method has gone through many transformations over time, it is probable that you will pick and choose how you would like to practice them and for what purpose. Ideally, they should represent a method for self-transformation.

For this exercise, read the pages of this chapter, and decide what the essential meanings for each of the Kuji you are practicing are. The purpose of each may be different depending on who is practicing them and why. Use the Kuji as a means of self-exploration. They were not intended for material gain.

Deepening Your Practice

There are numerous reasons why people have difficulty with their practice of Kuji Goshin Ho. These difficulties are not unique to the Kuji method, in fact, they are common when anyone pursues something that is new. First, understand that the Kuji are not something can be fully realized and put into practice by using only the intellect. The Kuji are a profound mystery and perhaps will always remain that way in your practice and in everyone else's. Because people in general tend to read through things quickly picking and choosing what feels right for them, often people move on 'thinking they've got it.' In truth, one must invest one's time in the Kuji as with anything else to reap real benefits.

There are people who live their lives guided by intense passion for whatever engages them. We have all met people like this; but once they practice for a while and the novelty wears off, these people lose interest in what they were once very passionate about and then move on to something else that suits them. You could say that the brevity of their practice could be gauged by the intensity of their initial interest. Having a normal skepticism about the Kuji and what it has to offer is normal, and if one finds value in it after much practice and discernment then the foundation one develops is based on a real investment of time and effort. This makes for a stronger and more rooted practice.

Some people may approach the Kuji with an interest in being able to magically do what others cannot do. Perhaps they have seen too many old ninja movies and somehow this strikes a chord in some way with them. Such people may think by learning Kuji number 6 so they will gain the power to read people's minds without ever making in effort to be a better listener or to take a greater interest in other people. These people are in their own way and cannot see truth for all of the illusions that cloud their thinking.

Some may approach the Kuji for personal gain. Perhaps they want to be better than other people so that they may have the edge. They might desire the qualities that they read from brief descriptions of the Kuji and want to seize that for themselves. However, if one's practice of the Kuji is for oneself and not for what is in reality the greatest good, then one's results will not be fruitful. By trying to be a better person and showing kindness to others as a motivation, one will develop rather quickly in all that the Kuji has to offer.

Keep Going

In a world that judges worth my immediate return of benefits, one may become easily disappointed and move on from any activity that challenges a person to change their way of thinking and behaving in fundamental ways. It requires persistence to overcome the ego's desire to satisfy itself through 'quick fixes.' Whether it be this, or some other spiritual practice that connects your own consciousness to the divine, don't give up.

Conclusion

The famous Abbot, *Hui-neng*, came from a very humble peasant family. Entering monastic life illiterate, he was given very menial tasks to do as a novice monk, but later in life he would be recognized for his phenomenal insight and become the Sixth Patriarch of *Ch'an* Buddhism. The following story about him illustrates the importance of focusing on essence rather than merely form.

> *"Hui-neng was once asked to clarify a sutra for a religious who did not understand it. Hui-neng asked the person to read the words for him because he could not read, and the person was a little put off and asked, "How can you understand what the sutra says if you can't even read?" Hui-neng responded, "Words are like a finger pointing to the moon. The finger is not the moon. If you look at the finger and not the moon, you will see only words but not know their truth."*

Over many centuries the Kuji have been adapted by various belief systems, and as one practices them it becomes apparent that people will pick and choose what aspects they find most suitable to themselves. Ultimately, the practice of Kuji must become your own. They must transcend culture and language to be a part of you. Practicing them regularly, one may find that there are different ways that they could be practiced. Different mudras, deities, chakras, and mantra are sometimes used. Variations exist from place to place and even from person to person because the goal of what you are trying to do is what is most important. That goal should be to realize wisdom and compassion as transforming factors in your life and the lives of others.

Sometimes we have to ask ourselves why some people might try to discourage us by saying that we are doing things the wrong way. There is no shortage of people in this world who think that they are right and everybody else is wrong. This however, comes from a place you want to avoid. A person who is more knowledgeable and coming from the right spirit of cooperation and understanding would offer a helpful suggestion to point the way in such a circumstance. Such is the spirit that we all must endeavor to develop. Don't worry if you don't have the best pronunciation of Sanskrit or Japanese words. Don't worry if you still can't get into what the deities are all about. Don't worry if you have difficulty focusing. All of this is really not the essence. These are only tools that point the way. These kinds of self-criticism represent doubt that is clouding the purity of your purpose. Let these feelings go. Let them have nothing to settle on. If you did nothing else other than sit down occasionally for a few minutes, slowed your breathing, relaxed and thought positive thoughts, it would probably benefit your health and overall well-being tremendously. Do what you can do and do it with the satisfaction of knowing that you are trying your best to be a better person. Affirm this every time you practice and in the end this is what really matters.

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